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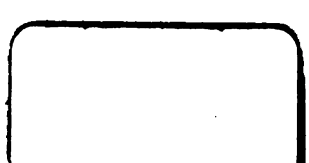

TOTEMWELL.

BY

GEORGE PAYSON,

AUTHOR OF "ROMANCE OF CALIFORNIA"

Lady Bustle.—Angels, are they?

Captain Pepper.—Angels! no; men and women, men and women; nothing more, nothing more, I assure you.—THE MILLER OF MANVERS.

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THOUGH I cannot promise as much entertainment, or as much elegance as others have done, yet the reader may be assured he shall have as much of both as I can. During the course of this story, therefore, all the wit and learning I have are heartily at his service; which if, after so candid a confession, he should, notwithstanding, still find intolerably dull, low, or sad stuff, this, I protest, is more than I know. I have a clear conscience, and am entirely out of the secret.

Yet I would not have him upon the perusal of a single chapter pronounce me incorrigible; he may try a second, which, as there is a studied difference in subject and style, may be more suited to his taste; if this also fails, I must refer him to a third, or even to a fourth in case of extremity. If he should still continue to be refractory, and find me dull to the last, I must inform him, with Bays in the Rehearsal, that I think him a very odd kind of a fellow, and desire no more of his acquaintance.—*Goldsmith.*

CHAPTER I.

TOTEMWELL.

TOTEMWELL is a large city in the interior of New England, and New York is a little village at the mouth of the Hudson. So much I write for the benefit of posterity. Yet this is not exactly correct either; it is New York that is the big city and Totemwell that is the little village. And the only explanation I can offer of this blunder is, that I have spent so large a portion of my life in Totemwell, that I have unconsciously fallen into the same habits of thought and speech that have for the last twenty-five years characterized the native inhabitants. Not, indeed, that any of them would at present institute a comparison between their own humble and obscure village and the far-famed city of the Mannahatans; but its capabilities, that's the word, its *capabilities*, are such, so great and manifold, that any one who is able to see through a millstone can also see that ere long, that is, in a thousand years or so, Totemwell must needs become a mighty city, so mighty that New York will be only a petty fishing town in comparison. At the present day, however, Totemwell is undoubtedly small, so small that I despair of giving my readers any proper understanding of how very small it really is. And perhaps it is as well that I should not; for, if I succeeded, they would certainly laugh themselves into fits at the idea. And then, if a native-born Totemwellian happened to be near, he would very possibly lend them a box o' the ear for their impertinence; for these Totemwellers are a mighty sudden, quick-tempered people, and there is nothing they are half so jealous and sensitive about as the honor of their birth-place. I advise you, therefore, to be very careful in this matter, and especially how you venture to expose your ignorance of its exact size

and situation; and, that you may the better remember this caution, I will tell you what happened to a certain outside barbarian for offending in this very particular.

Colonel Totling, the great man of our village, and all the greater because that was so small, like a fat man in an omnibus, or an elephant in a drawing-room, traveling once to Boston, to attend the sitting—or, more properly speaking, setting—of the legislature, of which honorary body he was at that time the most honorary member, was horribly annoyed by an inquisitive Virginian, who, after pestering him with all manner of impertinent questions, at length capped the climax of his atrocity by demanding whereabouts Totemwell might be.

"Sir," replied the colonel, drawing up his scanty five feet seven into good five feet eight, and casting upon his unhappy inquisitor a look that would have withered a whole acre of cabbages, "sir, if you are really so ignorant of the history of your country, the first boy you meet in the streets of Boston will be able to inform you;" and with that he turned loftily away, and went and sat down in the farthest part of the station-house; for this conversation took place at Worcester, and having been listened to by "a numerous number of bystanders," as the colonel afterwards declared, was long remembered in those parts as the best instance of the retort courteous that could be produced.

"But what was it that happened to the Virginian?" Why the utter scorn and contempt of Colonel Totling; and that, I take it, is about as bad as ever happened to anybody. When you know the colonel better, you'll think so too.

Totemwell consisted of two streets, one long and one short, and both together forming the letter L. On the long street there were seventeen dwelling houses, two stores, and the meeting-house,—on the short, three houses and a pigsty. There was also a river in Totemwell, as well as in Monmouth and Macedon, and "there is salmons" in all three. This river, which was called "The Little Trebec," furnished a very convenient shibboleth by which you could easily tell a native Totemwellian from a foreigner; for, while the former was always very careful to place the accent on the last syllable, the latter, either through heedless-

hess or ignorance, was sure to place it on the first. The little Trebec (by the way, if there ever had been a Great Trebec, as this diminutive seems to imply, I, for one, know nothing about it) was all the first part of its course a placid, amiable stream, with little force or depth of character; but, soon after entering Totemwell, as if suddenly inspired by the same dream of future greatness, it became ashamed of its former happy tranquillity, and began to rush and foam and tumble after the most approved fashion of its class; till at last, precipitating itself in its mad ambition over a ledge some fifteen feet in height, it suggested the idea of those amazing capabilities before mentioned.

Fifteen miles farther down the river, there had sprung up a bustling little manufacturing town, called Stratton Four Corners, which had grown more in ten years than Totemwell in two hundred; and though, like most youngsters of rapid growth, it was as awkward and shambling and uncouth as can be imagined, yet it was regarded with the bitterest envy by every man, woman, and child in our village; and the surest road to popularity among us was to decry our hated rival as stoutly as possible, and, at the same time, do all we could to be like it. Fortunately, however, no one has ever succeeded in this object, and Totemwell is still as sweet a wild-flower as can be found anywhere among the New England hills.

But, though it can never be great, it is destined, which is far better, to be famous; and this is what I am now about to relate.

One blustering afternoon in the latter part of March, 1836, a single traveler jolted wearily over the rough and frozen road that led to Totemwell. He cast, from time to time, anxious glances towards the western sky, and then along the way that yet lay before him, as if doubtful whether the sun or himself would get home first. The sun evidently had the advantage, for it was all down-hill with him, and his way was smooth and open: the horizon was already on fire with the smoke of his axles, while our traveler was yet several miles from home. The latter seemed at length to abandon the contest, and, drawing the buffalo robes closer about him, he settled gradually down into his seat in a moderate and philosophic way, which showed

that he was not a man to be disturbed by trifles. He had proceeded in this manner nearly a mile, and the dusk of evening was already closing around him, when suddenly the horse pricked up his ears, and the next moment, at a turn in the road, they came upon an overturned stage-coach, or rather wagon, and a little group of figures, stupid or distracted, like a swarm of bees round their rifled hive.

The traveler loosened his robes, and tightened his reins, then springing from his wagon, he left his horse standing in the middle of the road, with a simple "Wo! Sam!" and approached the scene of the disaster.

"Ah, Deacon Redwood, I'm pesky glad to see you," cried the driver, "here's a complete smash-up as ever I see, and what to do's more than I know."

"How many are there of you?" said the deacon.

"There's four of us, besides this lady and little girl, and she's so weak she never can walk that far to save her life."

"I'll take them in my wagon: the rest must walk. You can stay by the baggage till I send some one to help you. Where does the lady stop?"

"She was going to stop at the tavern; but she's in a mighty poor way, and I doubt if she'll be taken as good care of there as she ought."

"Very well, we must see if there isn't a better place for her. This way, madam, if you please, but she can't walk; one of you must help her; and here, give me the child. Poor little lamb! she's almost frozen, I'll wrap her in the buffalo. All right, Lijah, I'll have some one here in less than an hour."

No sooner said than done: the helpless mother and her child were carefully deposited in the wagon; and the deacon drove away, followed at a little distance by the envious pedestrians.

"Well," said Lijah, as soon as they were all out of sight, "for a bad job, I don't know nothing that could turned out luckier. If Deacon Redwood ain't one of the smartest men, and one o' the best men, too, that ever prayed in meetin', then I miss my guess. If all church members was like him, I'd jine the church to-morrow myself."

It was too dark now to see the deacon's face; but, as he drew near home, he said little, and his hopefulness seemed

to diminish. He stopped a moment at the tavern to leave word of the accident, and even asked to see the landlord; but before he could make his appearance the deacon had changed his mind, and, with an excess of decision that seemed to savor of weakness, he drove directly to his own door.

The door opened at the same instant; and then, to compare great things with small, a tallow candle and a sharp female voice thundered and lightened in the dull ear and duller eyes of night.

"So!" cried the voice, "you've got home at last. We've been waiting supper this two hours, but what in the name of goodness have you got now?"

"I've brought you home a visitor—a lady and her little girl, that were upset in the stage. They were going to the tavern, but they're not very well, so I thought they'd be more comfortable here."

"Visitors! I'll warrant, and sick to boot. What have I to do with visitors, and who's going to wait on 'em I wonder? It's always the way, but they shan't set foot inside my house, that's flat. I wonder what such folks think a tavern's for."

"Why, my dear, it is none of their doing—the mother is too weak to speak, and the little girl isn't much over three. They don't know but this is the tavern."

"I'll soon teach 'em, then; and as for you, Deacon Redwood, I wonder you don't know no better than to bring a parcel of beggars home in this way, and this time o' night. But I said before, they shan't set foot inside of the house, and I say so again."

"Catherine! they are my guests, and you *must* receive them—with decency, at least, if not with kindness;" and so saying, the deacon returned to the wagon; and, lifting out first the child and then the mother, he carried them into the house, and bestowed them as comfortably as he knew how before the half-starved fire.

"There," said he, "you'll soon feel better now, but first we must have on some more wood, there! Now I'll go and take care of my horse; and Catherine," he added in a whisper, "do see if you can't find something a little nice for sup-

per,—some cake or preserves, or something o' the sort, for I know they must be hungry."

"I guess what's good enough for us is good enough for them," muttered his wife as the deacon disappeared; "yes, and he's made fire enough to roast an ox. I ain't a going to see any such waste, I know;" and, with the word, she boldly rescued from the flames two of the largest sticks, and, having sprinkled them with water, she stowed them away again in the little closet by the side of the fire-place, from which they had just been taken. The deacon, on coming in, at once detected this stratagem, but he bit his lip and said nothing. Meanwhile, the strange lady sat in the same position, looking into the fire with that stupid insensibility produced by cold and sorrow; while the little girl, leaning against her, looked wistfully, now in her mother's face, and now at the supper which Mrs. Redwood was arranging upon the table.

"Come," said the deacon, "supper's ready. Won't you set up to the table, and take a cup of tea? It will do you good."

The lady made a motion mechanically, as if to accept this invitation; but her spirits suddenly failed her, and she fell forward in a fainting fit upon the floor. She recovered with difficulty; and, as she was evidently too weak for any farther effort, the deacon suggested that she had better retire as soon as a room could be prepared for her reception.

"I'll go and light a fire," said he, "in the north chamber, and you'd better air the sheets, for—"

"You go along, will you?" retorted his wife, "and leave me to see to that. A fire this time o' year! He means to burn us out of house and home, I do believe."

In half an hour the room was ready, and Mrs. Redwood very ungraciously assisted her unwelcome guest up stairs.

"You stay with me, won't you?" said the deacon to the little girl, "and have some supper. See, here's some nice bread and butter and raspberry."

"No, I don't want any supper," replied the child, bursting out afresh into a passion of tears; "I want to go with mama."

"Yes, but you'd better eat some supper first; it will do you good; see there! Doesn't that look nice?" And he

held out a slice of bread and butter, thickly covered with raspberry jam, as he spoke.

"I want to go with mama. Mama! mama! where are you?"

"Well, you shall," cried the kind-hearted deacon, "but perhaps you'll eat it up stairs;" and so saying, he took the little girl in one hand, and the tempting morsel in the other, and proceeded to the room whither his wife had already conducted the stranger. "There, you'll eat it now, won't you?"

"Yes, but I want to be with mama, you said I should."

"Well, ain't you with her?"

"I can see her, but I can't touch her. I want to touch her."

"But I'm afraid you'll disturb her, she's so sick and tired."

"No, I shan't 'sturb her; she likes to have me close to her, as close as I can get; don't you mama?"

"Yes, dear," replied the mother, in a faint whisper, "you can't get too close. In my heart, and in my arms—not long—no, not long; but come, dear."

"Isn't there any thing we can do for you?" said the deacon.

"No—no—all I want is rest. I thank you. But where is Mary?"

"My wife will bring her to you," said the deacon; "and she will set the hearth-brush by your bed, so that if you want any thing in the night, you can knock. We shall hear, for we sleep just below."

"Are we going to stay here always, mama?" said Mary, as soon as they were left alone together.

"No, my dear, not long; only a few days, perhaps not so much. But don't you like to stay here? This gentleman seems very kind to you."

"Yes, mama, and I love him dearly because he is so good to you; but I don't like that woman any; do you, mama?"

"You shouldn't say so, my dear, for I am sure she is very good to take so much trouble; but listen now to what I have to say. Do you think you could get along without me, if I should have to leave you for a little while?"

"How long, mama, seven minutes?"

"Yes, my dear, longer than that—a great deal, but not long. A week, two weeks."

"Oh no, I never could get along without you so long as that. But you aint agoing to leave me, are you, mama? Why can't I go with you?"

"Because, my dear, I may have to go on a long journey, and it wouldn't be convenient for you to go with me; but there, don't cry, dear; we can talk more about it in the morning. I am very tired now."

"Shall you be any better in the morning, mama?"

"In the morning? Oh yes, in the morning; sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"And shall I see you then, mama?"

"Oh yes, dear, I hope so—I know so."

"And will the sun shine, and will it be warm and pleasant?"

"It will be warm and pleasant—yes—but that city hath no need of the sun. But don't talk any more about it now, dear; you'll break my heart. O! would it were that morning now!"

"Will it be a long time before morning, mama?"

"Yes—no—the night is long—and very dark; but joy cometh in the morning. O, my precious child! if your father were only here! But he is here, and he will take care of you."

"I don't see him, mama."

"He is in heaven. You cannot see him; but he sees you, and will be with you."

"And my other papa is in Rio Jero. Well, good night, mama;" and the next moment she fell asleep.

The deacon's family were stirring early, the next morning; and it was hardly six when Mrs. Redwood, at the request of her husband, went to inquire after the welfare of her guests. She entered the room without knocking, and drew near the bed. The mother and child lay folded in each other's arms; their cheeks almost touching, and the extreme pallor of the one in strange contrast with the bloom of the other. Their rare beauty attracted Mrs. Redwood's attention; she drew nearer, and surveyed them more at leisure. She smoothed the counterpane, and as she did so her hand touched the mother's cheek. The hand of death had been there before

her. He had aimed so true, his fatal dart had struck the mother and spared the child. With a fearful shriek, Mrs. Redwood alarmed her husband; but when he entered the chamber, she could only point at the bed with her trembling finger—speak she could not. The little girl, awakened by their cries, clung affrighted to her dead mother; but neither voice nor sight nor touch could now bring her any nearer. Oh! what a mockery of communion is that distant nearness! blind eye, deaf ear, cold touch! can any veil be so thin, yet so impenetrable?

Thus early was little Mary cast among strangers. As soon as the remains of her mother had been laid in the village churchyard, the deacon exerted himself to discover her relations. All that he could learn from Mary was that her name was Wallace, that she had been living in a large house with other houses all around it, and that her father had sailed some time before for Rio Janeiro. An examination of the contents of her mother's trunk added nothing to this information. It contained simply a variety of wearing apparel, none of the marks on which were legible, and a few books, in one of which was written in a bold, strong hand, "For my dear Mary, from her affectionate husband."

Still, the deacon thought he should have little difficulty. He caused an advertisement to be inserted in several papers, containing a full account of the particulars of this sad affair, and at the same time wrote to Mr. Wallace at Rio Janeiro, though his ignorance of his christian name rendered success in that quarter extremely doubtful. In the meantime he did what he could to reconcile Mary to her situation; and his efforts would probably have been successful, if his wife had not done all in her power to counteract them. But Mary's grace and beauty, so far from softening her ferocious temper, only offended her still more by the contrast it afforded to her own children; and as her power in the house was greater than that of her husband, she was able to gratify her malice without restraint.

So month after month passed away, without bringing any tidings of her relations; and as the prospect of being freed from this new burden grew less and less, so did Mrs. Redwood's indignation increase in the same proportion, and every day Mary's situation became more uncomfortable. She

was not old enough, to be sure, to feel the full extent of her misfortune, but she was old enough to feel neglect and ill treatment and the want of that affection to which she had been accustomed. In short, the greatest calamity had befallen her that can befall a child, or in fact any human being whatever. There was nothing that she could love. Deacon Redwood was always or almost always kind to her, but he was very little at home. His manners, too, were cold and reserved, and not at all calculated to win the affections of a child. At meal times, and it was then only that Mary saw him, he was silent and abstracted. The children, of whom there were three, took pattern from their mother, and their chief delight was to torment the little outcast in every way that malice and ingenuity could invent; and that ingenuity, as will be shown hereafter, was by no means to be despised.

Mary's only place of refuge from her persecutors was a retired spot in the farthest part of the garden, where she had found a space between a row of aged currant bushes and the tottering fence, into which she could squeeze without much difficulty, and where she was effectually screened from all observation. She called this her arbor; and here she spent a great part of every pleasant day, playing, not with her doll or any of those rare and costly toys to which she had been accustomed, but with a few bits of purple crockery that she had picked up about the house, and the nozzle of a tin coffee-pot that she had found in the street when returning from Deacon Redwood's store, and which she valued more highly than any one who has never been a child can comprehend.

One day, after an unusual act of cruelty on the part of Mrs. Redwood, she had retired as usual to her arbor, and was giving herself up without restraint to a passion of tears, when she heard a pleasant voice on the other side of the fence, that said, "My dear, what ails you? what are you crying for?"

Mary stopped instantly, and applying her eye to a knot-hole in the fence, through which she had often surveyed with strange wonder and longing the world beyond, she saw first a few inches of calico of a very gay and cheerful pattern, then a clean checked apron, and finally a widow's cap, in which was framed one of the most simple, good-natured faces

that can be imagined, with a pair of little twinkling eyes, that seemed brimful of inquisitiveness and vivacity. Mary remained perfectly silent, hoping yet fearing that this heavenly apparition would speedily retire; but presently she spoke again, "Say, little girl, what ails you?"

"Who are you?" said Mary.

"Oh, it's only me, dear," said the little lady, trying in vain to reach high enough to see over the fence.

"But what's your name?"

"My name? why, do hear the child! My name, dear, is Bethany, Aunt Bethany. But what's yours?"

"My name is Mary Wallace; but are you my aunt?"

"Yes, dear, if you'd like to have me. I'm everybody's aunt. But you haven't told me yet what ails you."

"My mama is gone away, and I am all alone; that's what ails me."

"But there's Deacon Redwood, and Mrs. Redwood, and all the children; don't you love them?"

"Say, dear, don't you like to live with Deacon Redwood?

"No."

"Well, how should you like to come and live with me?"

"I don't know," said Mary, softly.

"I guess you'd like to, very well; but look through the fence, dear, and then mebbe you can tell better. Here I am, dear, right here; do you see? There, now, shouldn't you like to come and live with me?"

"Oh yes, I'm sure I should, if I only could."

"Well, my dear, we'll see. I guess I can contrive it. You don't know how good I am at contriving things sometimes. You'd wonder enough, I dare say. But I'll go and see Mrs. Redwood this minute; and you run along, too, for I shall want to see you."

Aunt Bethany was as good as her word. She went first to the store to see the deacon, and then to the house to see his wife, and inform them of her wish of adopting Mary as her own child. Mrs. Redwood, you may be sure, made no objection; and indeed, so impatient were all concerned to witness the fulfillment of the bargain, that that very night saw Mary transferred to her new abode. She carried with her what remained of her scanty wardrobe, the more valuable portion having been already appropriated by Mrs.

Redwood, to repay her, as she said, for the expense and trouble of keeping the child so long. She would gladly have done the same with the watch that had belonged to Mrs. Wallace, but she was compelled, however reluctantly, to yield that up to Aunt Bethany, and content herself with several other articles of more trifling value.

Mrs. Grant, or Aunt Bethany as she was oftener called, had a maiden sister somewhat older than herself; and though Mary had not seen this lady more than once, and even then at a safe distance, she could not think of an introduction to her without dismay. Some may perhaps regard this last sentence as a blunder, and think I should have said, "Though she had seen her very often." But not so; on the contrary, if she had seen her oftener she would have been still more alarmed. For it was found invariably to be the case, that the more one saw of Aunt Rebecca the greater was his awe and admiration. And, in truth, she was a formidable personage, and calculated to strike terror into stouter breasts than that of Mary. But I anticipate.

The house occupied by this amiable pair was tall and old-fashioned. An immense wood-pile, standing before the door, gave welcome promise of wide chimneys and cheerful fires. The yard was paved with a thick layer of chips that had gone on accumulating for many years. Nearer the house was a row of poplars, whose naked and withered tops had been cut off a few years before, and now a vigorous growth covered the unsightly scar. Passing through the narrow garden that skirted two sides of the house, with here and there a trim lilac or siringa, Mary followed Aunt Bethany into the end door, and turning to the left found herself in a small parlor or sitting room, opening into the kitchen.

Now, as this room occupies a very prominent position in our story, and is, indeed, the theater where our most interesting scenes will be represented, I must stop a moment to describe it more particularly. In this life every one has his peculiar trial. With one it is poverty, with another a scolding wife, with another pimples. I once knew a lady, young, rich, beautiful, whose only trial was a wart on the end of her nose. It was a very little wart, hardly to be detected with a microscope, yet it imbittered her whole exist-

ence. It was Mordecai sitting in the king's gate. But Aunt Rebecca's trial was none of these; it was simply the little room we have just entered. Yet it was a pleasant looking room enough, not handsome, certainly, nor spacious, but it was snug and homelike, and convenient, and the sun lay there nearly all the day. But all these advantages were lost upon Aunt Rebecca, because it wanted regularity. A picture that hung in one corner—it hung there because there was no other place to hang it—showed exactly what her views were upon this important subject. It was a picture done in silk, more than thirty years before, in Aunt Rebecca's girlhood; but, as she often declared, she could not do it better now. It was a rural scene, such perhaps as nature might have designed if she had been trained by a French tutor. A trim cottage stood in the center of the foreground, with a poplar and a maple on the right hand, and a poplar and a maple on the left. A ploughman with a yoke of oxen on one side, were balanced by a milkmaid and two cows on the other. A row of seven mountains formed a very respectable picket fence in the rear.

This was Aunt Rebecca's beau ideal; and if she had designed the house in which she lived, she would undoubtedly have made it to correspond. She would have had the fireplace in the middle of one side, not varying an inch to the right or left,—the doors and windows would have stood like the groomsmen and bridesmaids at a wedding, whether they led where it was convenient or inconvenient, or didn't lead anywhere at all,—so that a stranger, on entering and turning round once or twice, would have been entirely at a loss which way to get out.

Now, unfortunately for her peace of mind, this room, in which she was fated to spend the greater part of her life, possessed none of these advantages. The wide straddling fireplace seemed affected with the hip complaint, and thrust one of its gouty legs close up to the adjacent wall. Its waist was pinched out of all reasonable proportion, like a modern belle; and, fitting snugly into the left side, so high that even Aunt Rebecca could not reach it without the aid of a chair, was a mysterious sort of cupboard, that answered very well the idea of a bag or reticule. On the opposite side, a narrow door, fastened by a wooden button, opened into a dark

closet under the stairs, inhabited by a mixed population of shoes and shawls, and bonnets, which gave shelter to a whole family of ghosts and witches. The rest of the apartment displayed a corresponding want of that correspondence which was the light of the eyes to Aunt Rebecca; so that, as she often declared, it was the hardest room in the world to put to rights, and gave the least satisfaction after it was done.

When the plan of adopting Mary was proposed by Aunt Bethany, Aunt Rebecca had at first set her face against it, partly because she thought it would occasion her a great deal of trouble, and partly because she had not proposed it herself. She concluded, however, on second thoughts, that such talents as hers ought not to be unemployed, and that it was her solemn duty to exert them for the benefit of this deserted orphan. Having arrived at this conclusion, she seemed to have provided herself with a double portion of dignity; and after performing her usual household duties with even more than her usual scrupulosity, precisely as the clock struck three she sat down to prepare for the expected interview.

On being ushered into this awful presence, Mary's courage entirely deserted her, and she clung to Aunt Bethany for protection; but this silent homage was of all others most grateful to Aunt Rebecca, and indeed there was no way in which one was so sure of obtaining her favor. She smiled graciously upon Mary, and rising to meet her as she timidly approached, shook hands with her as if she had been forty years old, or thirty-five at the very least, asked her how she did, said she was glad to see her, and finally invited her to take a seat.

After supper, which was the best Mary had eaten since she came to Totemwell, Aunt Bethany brought down a little chair from the garret, and having installed Mary in it in front of the fire, she began to give vent to her delight and satisfaction by exclaiming, "There, now, I declare! isn't that nice? Aint you glad? I never felt so merry in all my born days. Ah well, if only my poor dear Joshua was alive to see the day! But it's all right, and he's gone to a better world."

When Mary was at length absolutely too tired to sit up

any longer, the good lady, though sorely against her will, was compelled to yield to the remonstrances of Aunt Rebecca, and carry her little protege up stairs to bed. She did not leave her, however, till she had almost smothered her with kisses, and asked her twenty times if she was warm enough; and when at last Mary fell asleep, she did so thinking that, except her own dear mama, there was nobody in the world that knew half so well how to be kind as Aunt Bethany.

The winter and spring passed away, and Mary's love towards Aunt Bethany, and respect towards Aunt Rebecca, were greater than ever. Aunt Bethany was not slow to return her affection; and though Aunt Rebecca did her best to conceal her weakness, and would have been highly indignant to have had such a charge brought against her, yet it was evident that she loved Mary better than any thing else in the world. Indeed, she loved her more than Mary or any one else, or even she herself, supposed. But her love manifested itself in a very different way from that of her sister. Aunt Bethany showed her affection by smiles, kisses, gingerbread, and similar tokens, and by letting Mary do exactly as she pleased; Aunt Rebecca declared hers by frowning and shaking her head, and by exacting the strictest obedience in every particular. Thus one supplied the sweet and the other the sour, and in this way produced a sort of moral punch, or lemonade, which all who have tried it must allow to be far more agreeable as well as more salutary than if the latter ingredient had been omitted. The mixture perhaps was a trifle too strong, which might have made it disagree with the stomach; but this fault was fortunately remedied, ere any very bad results had followed, by a seasonable dilution. In plain words Mary would have run great danger of being spoiled by to omuch tenderness on the one hand and too much severity on the other, if a fourth member had not been added to the family, who by sharing and thereby mitigating both those qualities rendered them comparatively harmless. But as this new comer is no less a personage than our intended hero, we would not for the world be guilty of so much rudeness as introducing him at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER II.

PHILIP SETS OUT ON HIS TRAVELS.

If our hero had been aware of the honor that awaited him, peradventure this knowledge, so flattering to his vanity, would have somewhat alleviated the distress with which he looked good bye to his father's house and the little family group that stood on the front steps watching his departure. But unfortunately his prurient imagination was unable to foresee so glorious a destiny; and neither the bright silv er dollar in his trowsers' pocket nor the well-filled box of sugar plums carefully packed in the top of his gaping horsehair trunk could entirely supply its place. His fellow-travelers—a middle-aged lady with a band-box, who had been making a visit to her city cousins; a strong-minded woman, who asserted her rights by talking in a very loud and peremptory tone to the driver, and by putting her foot upon the seat in front of her own; a pleasant man without much brain, and the strings of his collar straggling loose behind; another of disagreeable smartness; and two or three ordinary characters whose names will never be found in this history nor in any other,—had no more suspicion of his future celebrity than he had himself. They looked upon him, indeed, as a very unimportant personage; and, though the lady with the band-box asked him what his name was, and where he was going, and the good-natured man helped him into his seat, and the ill-natured man poked him with his elbow, and the ordinary characters paid him no attention whatever, they all thought, as far as they thought about the matter at all, that he was only a boy, just like other boys, or in fact rather more stupid and uninteresting. Nor indeed is this to be wondered at; for, except the briefest monosyllables, they got no more out of him than out of an oyster; but, as even

that pensive bivalve, though possessing a greater talent for silence than even an Englishman, may after all employ his leisure in contemplations deeper and more profound than the most loquacious chatterer could ever imagine, so our hero, though he said nothing, was yet far from being idle, as the event will show. The farther he went out into the world, the deeper he dived down into himself; and not only his senses, but his expression even, which usually reside on the surface, on the frontiers as it were of our little kingdom, seemed all to have forsaken their post and retired into the interior, to the very court and palace of their king, where they held high jubilee, and thought nothing, cared nothing, for what was passing in the world around them.

The strong-minded woman, who had from the first regarded Philip with evident aversion, seemed now determined to deprive him of the only comfort he had left, and compel him whether he would or not, to return to the dismal realities of his actual existence.

"What you thinking of?" she exclaimed, pushing him with her foot.

"Me ma'am?" replied Philip, looking timidly down at her dainty slipper, and recalling with a blush the ideas it had at first suggested.

"Yes, you ma'am! come speak up, and let us know what you've been thinking about all this while; something very interesting I dare say."

"Are you the President's wife?" demanded Philip with all the awe and respect befitting such a question.

"The President's wife! no, my dear! what could have put that into your head?" cried the lady; "is it these feathers in my hat, or—or something in my air and manner, my looks you know; come speak up, you needn't be afraid; what is it? Here! I've got some peppermints in my bag, and I always like to give them to good children. Now say, what made you think I was the President's wife?"

"Because you put your foot up on the seat;" returned Philip; whereupon the strong-minded woman hastily put down her foot, and drew as far back as possible into her own corner; while the good-natured man, and the ill-natured man, and the woman with the band-box, and the ordinary characters, laughed till Philip utterly confounded

at this unexpected burst of merriment, thought they must be all out of their senses. By degrees, however, they sobered down again, and Philip once more returned to the land of dreams; though ever and anon the good-natured man would stuff his handkerchief into his mouth; and whenever he did this, the whole coach was sure to shake in the most unaccountable manner.

Through quiet streets of white houses shaded with willowy elms, out into the open fields, where the broad sunlight lay like undrifted snow, or through the dreaming woods, where the thick foliage held up like a gossamer the floating falling rays, rolled the green and yellow stage-coach bearing our hero and his fortunes. They stopped for dinner at a little town into which they came about noon; and here Philip and his horsehair trunk—a very old horse it must have been—were transferred to a covered wagon, in which he was to go the remainder of his journey.

About the middle of the afternoon, the wagon drew up before the door of the old-fashioned house we have already described. Philip and his trunk were lifted down, the one possessing apparently almost as much volition as the other: the wagon rolled away; that scene was closed, and another was about to open. The necessity of action fell like a wet sheet upon our hero. He looked to his trunk for sympathy: the hair was already worn off its corners; the brass nails that studded its surface were of a rusty brightness; and the narrow strip of leather, that was intended to guard the crevices around the cover, was stiff and crooked with age. The trunk had evidently traveled before, and if it could have spoken, would doubtless have told its young companion what to do next; indeed, it said as plainly as looks could speak, that he must go up to the door and knock. While he was mustering courage for this mighty effort, the door opened, and the next moment Aunt Rebecca, like a full-length portrait stood framed within it.

This sudden apparition was not calculated to remove his fears. Wisely judging that first appearances are usually the most effective, Aunt Rebecca had taken time before she opened the door to throw an additional degree of sternness into her demeanor; and from her repository of voices she now raked up the gruffest, with the same amiable design.

At the same time, by a backward gesture of her whole person, difficult to explain but very easy to be understood, she drove Mary and Aunt Bethany and little Sally the maid, and Patsey the cat, who had also come to the door to welcome the newcomer, all in utter discomfiture back into the house.

"Your name is Philip Hastings," said the lady, not interrogatively but affirmatively, as Philip timidly approached the steps.

"Yes ma'am!" replied Philip casting down his eyes, and mysteriously scraping up a little heap of gravel with his right foot.

"You needn't tell me, for I knew it already; but don't scrape your foot about in that way, and look me straight in the face; so, you needn't look so frightened, I'm only going to study your physiognomy a little; there! that will do!" said Aunt Rebecca, already prepossessed in his favor by his evident inability to face her penetrating gaze, "You call your eyes black, I suppose?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, ma'am! but I believe, I've heard my mother say so;" replied Philip, feeling, though he hardly knew why, a slight inclination to smile.

"Well! well! they're not black for all that, only hazel; but tell me what sort of a boy are you? you needn't tell me either, for I know well enough already." And then she went on, speaking half to herself and half to Philip, "A very well-behaved child indeed! but spoilt by too much tenderness, as all children are; but easy to manage;" as if, as Falstaff says pleasantly of Justice Shallow, she had Philip already between her thumb and finger and intended presently to seal with him. "Well! you can come in now, but be sure and always wipe your feet clean on the mat!"

"Now sister!" said she, returning into the little sitting room, while Philip was industriously obeying her injunction, "I've made an excellent beginning with that boy, and I beg you wont go to spoiling all by treating him as if he was a girl. Remember! there's no way to get along with boys but treating 'em rather rough and stern like; for as sure as you go to fondling and petting 'em, they're sure to take advantage of it."

"Yes! I suppose so," sighed Aunt Bethany; "but poor

boy! how badly he must feel going away from home all alone among strangers, and he so young! I declare how I pity him!"

"Pity him as much as you choose, but don't let him see anything of it; it will only make him feel worse: he will get over it soon enough, I dare say, and will be all the better for it. Now do, just for once, behave like a sensible woman and my sister!"

Thus adjured, poor Aunt Bethany did violence to her own feelings, and squeezed into her round, good-humored face as much of Aunt Rebecca's sternness as it was capable of expressing; so that, when Philip entered the room, instead of running to meet him as her heart prompted, she remained coldly in the back-ground sitting in her low rocking chair, and only asked him how he did, and if he was not tired with his journey.

"No, ma'am! not very," he replied, stealing a glance at her countenance, and reading in it, in spite of its assumed severity, a more friendly promise than he had seen in Aunt Rebecca's; "but what shall I do with my trunk?"

"Oh! never mind about your trunk now," said Aunt Rebecca; "I'll tell John to carry it up stairs into your room after he's done his chores; but where are your manners? you hav'nt spoken to Mary Wallace! here Mary, come here and shake hands; and, if he's not too tired you can take him out into the garden till supper time; but mind you don't run on the beds, or pick any of the flowers without first asking leave!"

As Philip declared he was not tired in the least, and indeed manifested the utmost willingness to agree to this proposition, he and Mary soon found themselves in the garden; where the little girl's long-pent-up eagerness at once broke forth.

"Oh, dear Philip! I'm so glad you've come! for I've been so lonely—nobody to play with; and now we shall have such nice times! and you shall have half my playthings; and I've got the dearest little kitten, and a chicken, and a nest—for myself, you know, not the chicken—but it's big enough I guess for both of us; but first I want to know if you are going to love me; because, if you're not, you know, I shan't love you a bit; but if you do, oh! I shall

love you, oh! ever so much;" and here, as they had now reached a retired part of the garden, she threw her arms round Philip's neck and kissing him, exclaimed "You do love me now, don't you? I shall feel ever so badly if you don't; everybody else does, but I want you to, too; say, dear Phil, don't you love me?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Philip, looking rather silly, "how should I? I never saw you before."

"I know, but you can love me just one little bit, and bimeby you can love me better perhaps; I'm sure I love you already, as well as if I had known you ever so long; and I can be your little sister, and you shall be my brother; I never had any brother, you know; wont you now?

"I've got a brother and four sisters," said Philip, apparently, to his shame be it spoken, very little moved by this winning address.

"Have you!" said Mary, "how you must have cried when you came away!"

"I didn't cry a bit," said Philip.

"Didn't you! why I should have cried my eyes out; but perhaps it's because I never had a sister."

"It's because you're a girl," said Philip.

"Don't boys ever cry?" asked Mary.

"Not when they can help it; but come, let's go see your nest! I never heard of such a thing."

"Then you are going to love me?"

"Yes! I guess so; but don't plague me; I love my mother."

"Do you? oh then! you'll love me, I'm sure." And thus relieved of her doubt, Mary led the way to her nest.

It was a little hollow in the green field opening into the garden, just big enough for Mary to sit in comfortably, and was now half full of withered daisies and dandelions pulled to pieces and strewed over the bottom, like the moss and feathers in the nest of a robin.

"Oh what a nice nest!" cried Philip, "now let's play. I'm a bird, and sitting on my eggs!" and he at once ensconced himself in the little hollow.

"But you're not a bird," said Mary; "and you havn't any eggs."

"No matter for that!" cried Philip, "we can make believe so, and it will be first-rate fun."

"Will it?" returned Mary, with a puzzled air; "but what kind of bird are you going to be?"

"Oh!" said Philip, "I'll be an eagle; they're very big and fierce, you know; and you shall be a lamb I've carried away for my young ones: come here, young ones; here's a nice fat lamb I've brought home for your supper!"

"But I'd rather not be a lamb," said Mary, in some alarm.

"Oh! it wont hurt you a bit; besides, if you don't I wont love you," cried Philip, already aware of the secret of his power.

Thus persuaded, Mary consented to be a lamb, and suffered Philip to tear her to pieces to his heart's content.

"Are you going to meeting with us to-morrow?" at length she asked, when both were somewhat weary of this amusement.

"I suppose so," returned Philip, soberly; "they'll make us go, wont they?

"Oh yes! but don't you like to go to meeting? I do, for then I have on my new frock; it's ever so pretty; Dr. Edgerly—he lives over in that white house, there you see, with the trees in front—he said it was just like what the angels wear in heaven."

"She angels?" said Philip.

"Why yes! I suppose so;" replied Mary thoughtfully, "men wont wear white frocks in heaven, any more than they do here; but don't you like to have on your new clothes?"

"No! I hate it."

"Hate it! oh how funny! what makes you?"

"Oh! I always feel so Sunday, and as if everybody was looking at me."

"Don't you like to have folks look at you?"

"No! I guess I don't, I hate it worse than any thing in the world."

"Why! I never heard of such a thing! but come, there's the bell, it's time to go in to supper."

Familiarity being thus established between the children, there was no longer any bar to their intercourse. For the

first week they were almost constantly together; but at the end of that time, Philip was sent to the academy, and his new acquaintance gradually estranged him from his little play-fellow. Again and again, on holiday afternoons, when Mary had promised herself the highest satisfaction from his society, he preferred to join his school-fellows in their usual sports, or in some long and pleasant ramble through the fields and woods. On such occasions, Mary would watch him from the window with such tender melancholy as Andromache may have felt at the parting of her Hector; and when he was no longer in sight, she would return with tears to the imperfect sympathy of her toys. Dear little Mary! woman's lot is already on thee. It is perhaps as well to learn to bear the yoke in our youth. Weep, then, to the full your silent tears! let concealment feed on your damask cheek! blow out your love if you can; if not, let your heart all consume away. Time shall bring no perfect cure: as it is now, so will it ever be, yet with a difference.

CHAPTER III.

SUNDAY IN TOTEMWELL.

PHILIP, as we have said, attended the academy; but Mary, being as yet of too tender an age for that dignity, was put under the care of an elderly matron who taught a little school in another part of the village. Out of school, she was kept almost constantly busy by Aunt Rebecca, in sewing, dusting, picking over beans, and other household duties suited to her capacity; not because Aunt Rebecca wished to get rid of that labor, but simply because she was impressed with a due sense of the importance of that instruction she was laboring to confer upon her young disciple. But on Sundays, the two children were always together. They attended the same school, sat in the same pew, and read out of the same hymn-book. Yet I am sorry to say, this was the most troublesome day in the whole seven, both for Aunt Rebecca and the children. Whether it was that her principles were wrong or only the application I do not know, but for some reason the day seldom passed without a storm.

One Sunday morning, a year and more after Philip's arrival in our village, Mary being absent on a visit at Squire Moody's, Aunt Rebecca and her two companions in formal procession, set out on their way to meeting. A few minutes' walk across the fields brought them to the door of the unpretending temple, where for nearly a century the people of Totemwell had assembled to worship God.

The sacred edifice already exhibited the marks of antiquity. It had never been painted, but the sun and rain had been busy on its walls and roof, and clothed them in a uniform suit of rusty black, in perfect harmony with the sombre and somewhat gloomy religion of its founders.

Within, there was no ceiling, but, instead, a dusty cobweb of dark and massive beams crossing each other in every direction, with that lavishness of material peculiar to the early settlers in an American forest. The pews were square, and their high, straight sides were surmounted by a low railing, which gave them somewhat of the appearance of cages for wild beasts; a notion still farther confirmed by the restless, unhappy looks of the children, who peeped through the bars at the minister in painful doubt as to when he would be done, or slyly made faces at each other when the old folks were either sound asleep or listening to the sermon. Over the door there was a sort of den, occupied by the village choir; and how they got into it was a mystery to all the little boys in the congregation. The most important member, a lumbering bass viol, stands in the middle; and the little fellow who is hugging it with so much affection, and drawing his bow so caressingly over its strings, seems all the while about to lead it out for a waltz. Next to the viol stands a tall man, built pretty much after the same fashion, with a neck too long, apparently, for any but the very longest meters, so that he is obliged to cut most of his notes in two before they can pass muster with the rest of the company.

At his right hand, and managing with considerable difficulty to sing out of the same book, is a man with a very young head on a very old body, like a pea on a pumpkin, and with no more neck than a drum, so that it is a matter of no little perplexity to tell where he does his singing. But one thing is very certain, he is tremendously effective on the bass notes, which sound indeed as if they "came out of a barrel." It is impossible that two such instruments as he and his tall neighbor should ever be in harmony; so that it is, perhaps, quite as fortunate that we have no ear-trumpet to bring them nearer; besides we are more interested in studying the faces of those below.

That thin, spare man with high forehead, aquiline nose, and full, firm lips, is Deacon Redwood. He is decidedly the most intellectual man in the house; but the slight contraction of his eye brows, and a habit he has of working his mouth, give rather an unpleasant expression to his otherwise handsome countenance. He never moves his head

from the pulpit; but his eyes take every now and then, a rapid sweep over the congregation.

On the opposite side of the pulpit, sits a stout, hearty-looking farmer, surrounded by a numerous family, of which he is evidently very proud. He, too, listens attentively to the sermon, and occasionally expresses his approbation by a peculiar shake of the head; but towards the end he sympathizes a good deal with the children, he often shifts his position, and plays tattoo with his fingers on the top of the pew. On warm afternoons he is very apt to fall asleep. His great great grandfather was the earliest settler in Totemwell; and this circumstance, together with his wealth, his shrewd common sense, his bold, determined character, and open-handed liberality, had given him an influence greater than that of any other man in the village. His name is Moody, and he is called squire through courtesy.

The long prayer was an especial trial to our hero; for however long it might be, he was expected to stand through the whole of it. Indeed, sitting down in the midst of a prayer would have seemed to Aunt Rebecca quite as heinous an offense as sitting down in the midst of a basket of eggs. He had satisfied himself by repeated experiment that there were still just fifteen bars on each side of the pew, and had been puzzled as usual at finding that there were only fifty-six in all; he had made careful examination of all within his reach, and found that the same three were still loose and capable of revolving in their sockets; but these important matters were settled, and the minister was apparently no nearer an end than he was before.

"I really believe he keeps on praying on purpose to plague me," he said to himself as he shifted from one uneasy foot to the other. "To be sure he does," whispered an evil spirit, who happened to be just then wandering about in search of a home, and thought this would be as good a chance as any; "if I were you, I would twirl the loose rounds of the railing there, a little easy like; nobody 'll know it, and you can pray just exactly as well."

Philip instantly proceeded to follow this advice; but, unfortunately neglecting the caution that had accompanied it, he soon became so absorbed in this interesting occupation as to forget entirely where he was; when, all at once, a

sharp twitch from Aunt Rebecca suddenly shook out the evil spirit, and brought him back to a more seemly, and perhaps a more devout frame.

But now the prayer was over; and, amid the mimic thunder of seats and crickets, and the sudden burst of coughs and sneezes kept back for the last half-hour to the imminent danger of choking, like struggling greyhounds in a leash, the congregation composed themselves as comfortably as they could for the remainder of the service. Philip waited patiently for the minister to repeat his text, for so much he knew he should have to answer on his return home; then settling down into the corner of the pew, he passed the rest of the forenoon very pleasantly with Robinson Crusoe on his desert island, or in some other equally imaginary scene of happiness, whichever served best for the time to abstract his thoughts from the wearisome realities around him; till the benediction—happily, he would have thought, so called—brought him once more, but willingly, to his feet. The old folks stand rigid and immovable as iron statues till the last word is spoken; with many it is no small part of their religion to keep their itching fingers from the button on the pew door. The children crowd through the aisle as fast as they dare, creeping under the elbows of their seniors, and sorely discomposing their gravity. Those who live at a distance spend the short intermission in a lively interchange of gossip, seated on the warm tombstones or on the steps of the meeting-house, or leaning economically, for they are conscious of their Sunday clothes, against the stone wall; while all whose houses are near enough, hurry home to a hasty dinner.

Philip did not hurry, for he knew by sad experience that there was nothing worth hurrying for. The dinner was eaten with about as much dispatch as the Jewish Passover, and then the whole family set off again for church. The sky was bright, the air was warm, even the flies dancing in the shadow of the poplars to the sprightly tunes of Duke-street or Old Hundredth, seemed to invite to calm and peaceful thoughts. Philip soon forgot his vexation, as he walked along on the springing turf; his spirits rose to their usual level, and began to seek vent in various playful expedients, such as cutting off with a switch the heads of the

daisies and stalks of mullein left by the scythe, or leaping over the piles of stones that dotted here and there the surface of the field. Suddenly a squirrel poked his head out of a stone wall, and after an inquisitive look and a saucy whisk of his tail, darted away. Philip uttered an exclamation of joy and welcome, which called forth a severe reprimand from Aunt Rebecca, and an exhortation to remember the Sabbath-day and keep it holy. The poor boy instantly subsided into his usual self.

"Oh!" thought he, "I wish I was a squirrel; they don't have to keep Sunday; they can play as much as they've a mind to, and have plenty of nuts to eat, and not that ugly hash. I'm afraid I shall never learn to be good, or to love Sunday. What a stupid place heaven must be, where it is Sunday all the time!"

And then a picture of heaven presented itself to his imagination, under its usual form of a large company of little boy and girl angels, sitting on hard wooden benches, one behind another, and singing very loud out of Watts', and Select Hymns, without daring to whisper or even to look behind them. The only comfortable thought about it was, that they should have wings.

The afternoon service was at length over; and all the congregation, turning their backs upon the minister, stared with all their might up into the little den aforesaid, where the tall man and the short man, and the big-bellied viol, and all the rest of the choir, were turning very red in the face in their eagerness to surpass all their former efforts. The good old minister pronounces the benediction, the congregation again disperse, the sexton closes the door with a noisy echo; and the old house is left for another week, for the lazy dust to settle on the benches and work its way down into the faded and flattened cushions.

"Now, Aunt Rebecca," exclaimed Squire Moody, as that lady approached in rather a hostile attitude, "you ain't a-going to take Mary home, I hope." If I'd have known that, I wouldn't have brought her; I thought, of course, you'd let her stay the week out."

"She can just as well go home to-day as to-morrow," replied Aunt Rebecca, stiffly, "and that will save so much

trouble;" and without staying farther parley, she led Mary off in triumph.

"Well I vow," cried the farmer, looking after her with any thing but a friendly aspect, "if 'twasn't Sunday and on the meeting-house steps too, I'd swear; but I'll make it up to-morrow;" and with this consolatory reflection he took his seat in his wagon, beside his buxom wife, with his two youngest children stowed away in the bottom, and drove soberly down the street.

"What o'clock is it?" said Mary, as she and Philip reluctantly entered the house.

"Only three," replied Philip; "we shan't have supper this two hours."

"Oh dear," said Mary.

"Oh dear," said Philip; and his exclamation, though apparently only an echo, expressed, far more than hers, "Oh, dear, what shall we do all this long, tiresome afternoon."

"Take your Bible and read in that," said conscience, "like a good boy."

"I can't read in the Bible all that time," he replied. "And you don't want to be a good boy either, I hope," whispered the same evil spirit that Aunt Rebecca had shaken so effectually in the morning; but which it now seemed she had shaken no farther than down into his boots. As if conscious that she had not then completed her work, she here interposed again. "Why don't you take a book and read?" said she, as she sat down to one of St. Paul's epistles, "there's plenty in the library."

Thus commanded, for Aunt Rebecca usually delivered her commands in this way, Philip, with a rebellious yawn, walked across the room to a tall, old-fashioned secretary with several drawers at the bottom, and a number of shelves at the top, protected by darkly-polished doors. On these shelves was arranged what was called the library, consisting mostly of religious works, in musty bindings, and dirty paper, with yellow edges; one or two odd volumes of Hannah More, that especially containing the story of Black Giles, the poacher; Baxter's Saints' Rest, The Pilgrim's Progress, Beck's Book of Martyrs, and others of a less popular description. The Book of Martyrs was ornamented with a variety of plates—gridirons, pots and kettles, and other utensils of a

similar description. These illustrations were highly edifying to Philip, and perhaps, hardly less so to Mary; and though they had already studied them over and over again, they were still as entertaining and instructive as ever.

After they had spent an hour very pleasantly in this manner, and had as usual turned over all the plates with a running commentary on each, Philip restored the book to its place, and turned again to the window. Unfortunately there was nothing without to attract his attention, and his fingers were irresistibly drawn towards the pieces of paper with which Aunt Rebecca had skillfully patched the broken panes. A pin would go through so nicely, and the hole would never be noticed.

Five ticks from the old house clock, and five holes almost invisible in one of Aunt Rebecca's angular patches. The light that stole through was yellower and brighter than what came through the glass; but the philosophy of this was too deep for Philip; he saw only five stars in a firmament of whitey-brown paper, and was too much absorbed in the beauty of his creation to inquire into its nature. He was preparing, in spite of Mary's gentle remonstrance, to add a sixth star to his constellation, when a sudden start from her arrested his uplifted hand, and looking in her face he saw reflected there, as in a mirror, the terrible wrath of Aunt Rebecca. His first impulse was to steal a glance in the same direction to see if his suspicions were correct; but wisely arguing that such a movement would have the appearance of fear or weakness, he determined not even to let her know that he was conscious of her observation; and becoming suddenly very much interested in the wood-pile opposite the window, he began to study its physiognomy with most commendable assiduity. All this while, Aunt Rebecca sat without speaking, upright and immovable, with her finger still at the middle of a verse, and stared concentratedly at Philip and his handiwork; while wonder, indignation, and despair were successively, or all at once, depicted on her countenance. Yet she was really neither very indignant nor surprised, but simply counterfeited those emotions as a suitable way of impressing upon her young disciple the enormity of his offense.

Not a syllable did she utter; yet Philip felt, by some

secret, perhaps mesmeric influence that her eye was still upon him; and now it became a struggle between them which should first betray this mutual consciousness. The child, as the weaker party, was compelled to yield. He slowly turned his head under this mysterious fascination, till he encountered the severe gaze of his tormentor, then dropped his eyes at once, and stood before her convicted and abashed, without a word to offer in excuse. Still Aunt Rebecca continued her stony gaze; and again, in spite of all his efforts, Philip was compelled to raise his downcast eyes to her face. She was not without hopes of achieving a complete triumph in a way that would have been so flattering to her vanity; but she was disappointed,—Philip stood his ground manfully, and bore up against the battery of her glances with unyielding resolution; till at length, angry at her ill success, or else the counterfeit having kindled a real passion, she broke the awful silence with the awful words, cold and slow, "Go to bed!"

There was no resisting that mandate; so to bed he went, slamming the door as hard as he dared, and stamping all the way up stairs to his room; where he spent the next hour in assuring himself that he didn't care; that he wished he was dead; that he hated Aunt Rebecca; and that he didn't mean to try to be good any longer, for it wasn't any use.

Aunt Rebecca listened till she heard him enter his chamber, then with a grim smile that would come out in spite of her, but which she was very glad Aunt Bethany did not see, she went on with her reading.

CHAPTER IV.

BEHOLD HOW GREAT A MATTER A LITTLE FIRE KINDLETH.

PHILIP, as we have seen, went to bed Sunday afternoon wishing he was dead; he woke up Monday morning, very glad to find that he was alive. And very alive he felt too; for there were his week-day clothes; there was his knife, his bits of string, the boat he had been whittling, and all the other precious lumber from which he had been so long divorced. And then, not in his pockets but in his memory, was Peter Parley's History of the American Revolution, and Swiss Family Robinson, and Arabian Nights Entertainments! what fun he would have! 'Twas a good world, after all.

So, gaily huddling on his jacket and trowsers, laughing to himself because he got his right leg into the left, running to the window to give the sun a welcome, tumbling tumultuously down stairs to give another to Aunt Rebecca, Aunt Bethany, Mary, Sally, and all the rest of the family, with a face full of riotous joy—I can no more stop to finish the sentence than he could—"Surely," thought Aunt Rebecca, the boy's bewitched!"

"Oh!" thought he, "how easy 'tis to be good of a Monday!"

Breakfast was no sooner over than he hurried into the yard behind the house to amuse himself till school time, and see if every thing was in the same state as when he left it, a long, long day before. The yard was separated from the adjoining garden by a low stone wall surmounted by a picket fence. A plum tree, the only plum tree in Totemwell, hung over the wall; and the fruit, now bursting with the hoarded sweets of summer, seemed crying to be eaten. If it had been any other day, Philip would have kept as far from this dangerous temptation as possible; but this morn-

ing he felt so boldly virtuous that he thought he might safely venture within the charmed circle. From this it seems but fair to conclude that too much goodness is as fatal as too much vice, and that here as elsewhere a middle course is most to be commended.

Philip took one of the plums in his hand, it just filled his fat little palm, and he could see the bright purple in streaks through his fingers. He gave it a gentle squeeze; and the plum, as if sensible of his affection and all ripe for love, detached itself from the parent twig, and rested confidingly in his embrace. What should he do now? for he had contemplated no such abduction. He tried in vain to replace it; but that tie once broken could never be restored: the plum obstinately refused to acknowledge any other master. He attempted to tie it on with a bit of string, but he could not make it hang naturally. He would carry it in and give it to Mrs. Redwood, but he was afraid. Should he eat it, since there was no other way? His lips already opened wooingly, he approached it nearer and nearer, still dallying with his sin; then with a savage gust he swallowed it at once. It melted in his mouth like a honey flake, and the spice of bitterness his conscience gave it only added a more grateful tang. It is the first step that costs, and the first plum; but having eaten that, he ate six more without the slightest difficulty, and in all probability would have stripped the tree if a sudden alarm had not interrupted his operations.

Hardly had he disappeared, when Mrs. Redwood coming out to the well to draw a pail of water, stopped a moment to count her plums and see that none were missing. The horrors of that dreadful moment can be better imagined than described. Gladly would I draw a veil over the painful scene. The sun, so the chronicles of that period inform us, unable to endure the sight, hid his face behind a wet blanket that was fortunately hanging in the yard. Half Totemwell suffered that sad eclipse. "Oh my plums! my plums!" gasped the unhappy Mrs. Redwood, totally overwhelmed by this terrible bereavement; "my greengages that I've counted so often! here, Peter, run over to the store as fast as you can, and tell your father to come here this minute. Somebody's been stealing my plums; and

tell him to bring the constable—seventeen plums! oh the monster! I'll have him put in jail! why don't you run?"

The deacon was in his store, divided among half a dozen customers, when Peter burst in upon him with this startling announcement. He waited very deliberately till the last customer had left the store, and then turning to Peter inquired if he were perfectly sure.

"Oh yes," said Peter, "she counted 'em twice over."

"And does she know who did it?"

"No, she don't—but I guess—"

"Well, what do you guess?"

"I guess 'twas Mary Wallace."

"Did you see her do it?"

"Y—e—s."

"Very well; you can tell your mother I'm busy now, but I'll see to it as soon as I find time."

Philip had well nigh forgotten his offense, and began to think he should hear no more about it, when a few days after, on returning home from school, the first object that met his eyes was his little playmate Mary, who stood in a corner sobbing bitterly; while the frowning visage of Aunt Rebecca and the ill-disguised compassion of Aunt Bethany, showed that some dreadful act of justice had just been enacted. The sight of the dinner, however, which was unusually good, somewhat blunted his rising sympathy; and he was preparing to do full justice to his appetite, when Aunt Rebecca, unwilling to let slip so favorable an opportunity, exclaimed, "You see now, Philip, how unhappy it makes children to be wicked; so I hope after this you will always try to be good, and then you will be sure to be happy."

"Don't good children ever have the stomach-ache?" said Philip.

"Hush, child," cried Aunt Rebecca; "don't let me ever hear you talk so silly; and if you are ever tempted to take what doesn't belong to you, think of that—she's been stealing some of Mrs. Redwood's plums, and now you see what comes of it."

"She!" cried Philip, turning pale as any ghost; "she didn't; I don't believe she did it."

"It is not proper for you to express an opinion upon the

subject—at least not until you are asked," said Aunt Rebecca; "but Peter Redwood saw her do it, so there's no use saying any thing more about it."

Philip hesitated, blushed, stammered, and finally exclaimed, "I know she didn't do it, for I did it myself."

"*You* did it?" said Aunt Rebecca.

"Yes, 'em."

"You stole Deacon Redwood's plums?"

"Yes 'em."

"Well," cried Aunt Rebecca, at length recovered from the shock, "I thought I should find out the truth before I got through; it's useless to try to deceive me; but that odious Squire Moody!—humph! Mary, why don't you come to the table, and eat your dinner? Sit still, Philip, I am not angry with you, child; and Mary, remember now, don't ever say a word about this to anybody, for poor Philip would feel so badly; and you shall have that nice turnover that Squire Moody—ugh! brought for you."

In all this, Aunt Rebecca only imitated the conduct of Isaac, who, having blessed Jacob through ignorance, afterwards refused to recall the blessing in favor of the rightful heir. "I have blessed him; yea! and he shall be blessed."

As some gentle kid on being thrown into the cage of a majestic lion, at first trembles and almost expires with fright, but by degrees recovers his confidence and skips and frisks about the cage, so did our hero gradually regain his former spirit and appetite, though disturbed by an occasional misgiving lest this strange forbearance should after all be of a like nature with that which the noble beast aforesaid extends to his helpless playfellow.

And in truth Aunt Rebecca's behavior would be wholly unaccountable to any one ignorant of the circumstances that occasioned it. She had heard that morning for the first time the story of Mary's trespass, and was full of the virtuous indignation thence arising, when the door opened and in came Squire Moody.

"Ah, good morning," cried Aunt Rebecca cheerfully; "take a chair; and how's all the folks on the farm?"

"All well, thank'ee, Miss Rebecca; and how is my little Mary? What's to pay now?" he said to himself; "I never saw the old lady in such good spirits before; I'm afraid something bad has happened." And then, as she did not

immediately answer his question, he repeated it in a different form. "Where's Mary? I've brought her a turnover; she always thought my old woman made 'em nicer than anybody else, you know." "There," thought he, "I'm in for it now; if that don't fetch her I'm mistaken."

Fetch her—that is, as one is said to fetch a pump when he pours into it a small quantity of water with the expectation of receiving it back again tenfold. The experiment was eminently successful: Aunt Rebecca at once lost all her advantage; and instead of harassing the enemy, as she had intended, by a sort of guerrilla warfare by slight hints and inuendoes, she was betrayed into a very different course of conduct.

"We are wonderfully obliged to you, Mr. Moody; but if my turnovers aint good enough for her, she'll have to go without. And after what she's been doing, she may think herself well off to get a crust of bread and cold water, without—"

"Why, what in the world is the matter? Has she broken your best China bowl, or trod on the cat's tail, or—"

"No, sir; it is something far more serious. An offense against myself I could have forgiven; but an offense against morality and religion!—and after all the pains I've taken with her, too!" said Aunt Rebecca. "But I ought to be thankful I've done my duty. To think she should go and steal from good old Deacon Redwood, who has always been so good to her!"

"Stealing! and what has she been stealing, I should like to know?"

"Well, sir, you shall know, and I shall be glad to hear what you have to say then. She has been stealing plums, Squire Moody—Mrs. Redwood's plums, that she was so proud of."

"Don't believe a word of it," said the Squire.

"Oh no, I didn't suppose you'd believe it; and I should be glad if I didn't believe it myself, but the proof is too plain to be mistaken."

"Let us hear how it all is; perhaps after all you may be mistaken."

"Thank you, sir, but I'm not apt to be mistaken. I can manage my own affairs, and I believe I have as much penetration as most folks."

"A plaguy sight too much sometimes; but it's no use talking here all day; all I say is, it's a sin and a shame to punish a child for what it hasn't done; and I no more believe Mary Wallace stole those plums than, that my name isn't John Moody."

"Perhaps not, perhaps not, Squire Moody; all folks havn't the same eyes, you know; but wont you stop and take dinner with us? it's almost—"

"No I wont!" interrupted the indignant farmer, and away he went slamming the door with no gentle hand behind him. Aunt Rebecca watched him till he turned the corner, then shut the door as softly as possible, and returned to the kitchen with as near an approach to a smile as she was ever known to allow. Happy Aunt Rebecca!

Squire Moody diligently nursed his wrath against Aunt Rebecca, all the way to his own door; but he had no sooner entered the house than the sight of the cheerful group within at once restored his good humor. The farmer's kitchen was a large, low-studded room, with a fire-place as capacious as a dozen in these degenerate days. The furniture, which was unusually solid and substantial, had apparently always lived together, so long, at least, that not the smallest article could be removed without being missed and mourned by all the rest.

But the subject of principal attraction was Mrs. Moody herself, or the old woman, as her husband called her; though her age could not have been at this time much above forty, and she still retained all her former comeliness. A more comfortable looking matron it is impossible to conceive, or a more transcendant genius in all the arts of housewifery. Aunt Rebecca, who came nearer to her in this respect than any other person in Totemwell, was yet decidedly inferior; and there was, indeed, the same distinction between them that Johnson has drawn so elaborately between Pope and Dryden.

Mrs. Moody had most nature, Aunt Rebecca the greater art. Aunt Rebecca was dependent upon rules, Mrs. Moody was guided solely by the inspiration of the moment. Aunt Rebecca never disappointed expectation, but Mrs. Moody often rose above it. Mrs. Moody's dishes were eaten with frequent astonishment, Aunt Rebecca's with perpetual delight.

Many an aspiring housewife had toiled in vain to catch the immortal secret; but—

"Ma'am Moody's magic could not copied be;
Within that circle none durst walk but she."

"Well father," cried Mrs. Moody, as soon as the calls of hunger were somewhat appeased, "how did you find Aunt Rebecca?"

"And did you give her the turnover?" cried Susan, a little girl about Mary's age, who had been waiting impatiently ever since her father's return, to inquire after her favorite.

"Poor Aunt Rebecca," said Mrs. Moody, after her husband had answered both these questions, and given a full account of all that had happened, "she can never forgive me because Mary Thompson told her she heard Mrs. Bennet say I made the nicest pies and cakes she ever tasted. But what made her think Mary stole the plums? Did anybody see her do it?"

"Not as I knows on; I asked her that myself, but all I could get out of her was that she knew what she knew, and didn't want anybody's advice but her own. So I came away and left her; and, if it wasn't for Mary and the widow, who is after all a real nice sort of a body, though she daren't say her nose is her own when t'other one's within half a mile, I'd never set foot inside the house again. But wont the deacon's wife be in a terrible pother?"

"Sure enough," cried Mrs. Moody, "they say she counts her plums twenty times a day. There wan't but twenty-seven of 'em, I believe, in all."

"Yes! Squire Buckle told me to-day, there were twenty-eight. I met him afterwards, and he said she'd been everywhere talking about it. It seems there was one she hadn't counted, it hugged in so close under a leaf, to get out of the way I suppose; though how *she* could have made such a mistake I can't imagine."

"I have heard say," said Green Cram, one of the farmer's hired men, "that she gets up to count 'em two or three times most every night."

"And I shouldn't wonder a mite if she did," said the maid Becky; "for when I was a stayin' with her, she waked me up one night, out of a sound sleep, to ask me why I hadn't put the cat down cellar 'fore I went to bed. I cleared out the very next day, for I wan't agoin' to stand no such doin's."

"Wall!" said Jesse Lothrop, the other hired man, "whoever stole them are plums, I pity him if Miss Redwood finds it out, an' that's a fact."

"So do I," cried the farmer, "but they'd better belong to Miss Rebecca than anybody else."

"That's a fact;" said Jesse, "Aunt Rebecca 'll give her as good as she sends any day; they're a pair, them two, an' that's a fact,"

"No more a pair," cried the farmer, "than my Shag"—here Shag, an immense Newfoundland, seated gravely by his master's knee, opened a mouth like the cave of Kentucky—"and that puppy there. Aunt Rebecca could bite her head off at one mouthful."

"That's a fact," said Jesse; "but don't you want to go out and take a squint in the pig sty?"

"Why? has the old sow?"

"Yes! she's been and done it; she's shelled out nine o'the puttiest pigs I ever did see, an' that's a fact."

"Stop a minute," cried Mrs. Moody, and let me see if you've got every thing I wanted for the party. I'll warrant you've forgotten something or other. This big bundle—that must be the raisins, and here's the allspice, and cinnamon—and ginger—and currants—but I don't see any pepper. Why John! you've forgot the pepper!"

"Why! did you want any pepper?"

"Why yes! we couldn't have any beans, you know, without pepper; and pepper was the very last thing I told you about."

"Oh yes! I remember, so you did; and more than that, I saw the deacon put some up with my own eyes—I thought I should sneeze my head off; are you sure there is'nt any there?"

"Not a scrid!"

"Stop a bit! perhaps I put it in my pocket; oh yes! here 'tis; now boys, let's be off; but when did you conclude to have the party?"

"The first Wednesday in October, or Thursday may be; I thought that would be as good a time as any; wont it?"

"Yes! any time after this week; only be sure and make it a rouser."

"You needn't worry about that."

"No!" said Jesse, "that's a fact; but come, Squire, let's be movin'."

CHAPTER V.

MRS. MOODY'S PARTY.

The first Thursday in October came, and with it the fifteenth return of Mrs. Moody's great autumnal party. Every thing proved favorable on this auspicious occasion. All Totemwell was there, that could either walk or ride, and at an early hour the old house was filled to its utmost capacity. Mrs. Moody had given a general invitation to everybody she saw to come and bring everybody else; the neighboring towns had been also included in her hospitality; and there was but one family within a dozen miles who felt themselves absolutely excluded from this time-honored festival.

In spite of its republican, almost Arcadian simplicity, Totemwell at that time recognized the same distinction of classes which prevails in our larger cities; though the line of demarkation was drawn in a somewhat different place. While, therefore, the minister and tailor, the lawyer and blacksmith, the doctor and carpenter, may be regarded as the lawful representatives of upper-ten-dom, that lower class which is usually so numerous was in this instance reduced to a most lamentable minority; a nearer approach, I apprehend, to the principles of the Socialists or Fourierites than is to be found anywhere else, and I would accordingly recommend it to their serious attention. The cause of this utter isolation of a single family was to be found, not in their poverty, for there were other families in the village as poor as themselves, nor in any offense they had committed, for a more harmless set of beings was nowhere to be met with,—but in a mere accident of birth, that neither wealth, nor learning, nor moral excellence could counterbalance. They had, in short, been guilty of the unpardonable folly of being born black when it was the fashion to be white; this being the case, Mrs. Moody could not, of course, include them

in her invitation. If she had done so, the minister's family—the lawyer's family, the blacksmith's family, and all the other families named or not named above, would have felt their dignity grieviously affronted, and probably left her house in disgust.

The history of these poor people can be given in few words. Born in slavery, in the State of Virginia, they had lived there many years perfectly content with their condition; till, their master dying, the wife was sold to a neighbor, while her husband was bought up for the Mississippi market. Rendered frantic by the thought of separation, the young couple contrived to effect their escape into Ohio, and from thence into New York, intending to pass over into Canada; but an accident interfering with this design, they came down into New England, and at last found a resting place in our obscure village, where they earned a very comfortable support by cultivating a small patch of ground, and by doing all sorts of odd jobs for their wealthier neighbors. The only name the fugitive had time to bring with him was Billy; but he had since obtained another through the generosity of Colonel Totling, who called him one day into his store, and there in presence of half a dozen witnesses, bestowed upon him the name of Button, by which he was ever afterwards distinguished. The poor fellow thanked his benefactor as well as he knew how; though some thought there was no great reason for gratitude on his part, inasmuch as the Colonel had given him this shining title not out of any kindness towards him, but simply to gratify a private grudge he had against Squire Buckle. Certain it is, that the Squire was very much annoyed when he found what had been done; but, as there was then no help for it, he sought to revenge himself by giving Mr. Button the additional title of Colonel. Billy, as might be supposed, was prodigiously pleased with this new honor: in twenty-four hours everybody had heard the story, and the mortification of Colonel Totling was complete.

When Philip and Mary, accompanied by Aunt Rebecca and her sister, arrived, a little after six, at Squire Moody's, they found some thirty ladies and gentlemen in the best room, drawn up facing each in formal rows, the ladies each sitting in precisely the same attitude, with their handkerchiefs in their hands, and their hands in their laps; while the gen-

tlemen, for want of a similar occupation, were busily twirling their thumbs, or fathoming the depths of their breeches pockets.

Philip, peeping through the crack of the door at this awful assemblage, as silent as a Quaker meeting, was afraid to go in; but Mary, who was free from those uncomfortable feelings, ran boldly into the midst of the charmed circle; when all the ladies, and half the gentlemen, at once made the most desperate efforts to attract her attention. Any one would have supposed they had never seen a child before, so eager were they all to give her a seat by their side, and enter into conversation with her on some subject, no matter what; so that for a while she was almost bewildered by the multiplicity of questions that were poured upon her. As a pile of shavings and chips, pine knots and sturdy logs, rest unsocially in the frozen chimney, but presently a little match pokes its nose in among them, and instantly all are in a blaze, with such crackling laughter, such bursts of fun and jollity, as makes one rub his eyes and look again; so instantaneous and magical was the effect of Mary's appearance. The arrival of new guests continually added fresh fuel to the fire; and when, at seven o'clock, Mrs. Moody came in to announce that supper was ready, nothing more seemed wanting to increase the general hilarity.

And now, if my feeble pen were equal to the task, I would gladly fill a page, or even a whole chapter, with such an account of this Totemwellian banquet as should make the mouth of every individual reader water like a diamond of a hundred carats. It would be indeed to me a labor of love; for, through the soft haze of a brief antiquity, as through the mellow light of the Indian summer, rise, slowly curling, the fragrant steams from a hundred dishes, reverberated from the low-hung ceiling that is so broadly smiling back the joy; while,

> "Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide,
> Wallows the 'oak log's' roaring tide,"

throwing its ruddy, drifting light on the loaded table, on youth and grace and beauty, now, alas! faded like a sunset cloud, or laid low in the grave.

But there is no need; for, though such feasts, belonging, as they do, to the past, have no longer a place or existence

among us, yet their memory has been fondly preserved by their grateful chronicler in the classic history of Ichabod Crane, on occasion of that never-to-be-forgotten entertainment given by hearty old Baltus Van Tassel, of Sleepy Hollow. In abundance and variety, however, even that must yield to the one we are now describing. There were the cakes—the pies—the ham—the cream; and there, too, was the renowned Pandowdy, which, whether you call it a pie or a pudding, is still first of its kind; there were beans baked to a turn—roast pig for Elia and his followers—and boiled pork and cabbage for Squire Buckle.

And if the supper, as was again and again declared, surpassed all that had preceded it on similar occasions; so was the present company the most select that had ever been assembled in Totemwell.

There was Mr. Bennett, the minister, with his wife and daughter; there was Squire Buckle, Mrs. Buckle, and Miss Lavinia Buckle; there was Colonel Totling—and Dr. Edgerly—and Mr. Pease—and Mr. Simpson, the butcher, and a very fat and worthy man, indeed he was a member of the choir—and the widow Tafts, and Miss Julia Anna Tafts—and Deacon Redwood, Mrs. Redwood, and four young Redwoods; and a host of others, that, if I should name them all, would equal the famous catalogue of Homer.

"Shameful! shameful!" said Mrs. Redwood to herself, "I never saw such a sight; here, boys! boys! be sure and eat as much as you can, for if you don't, it 'll all be wasted."

"Yes! mother," replied those dutiful and obedient children; and, hardly waiting till Mr. Bennett had pronounced a blessing, they at once fell to work on that part of the table exposed to their onslaught, with such vigor and perseverance as threatened its total devastation, and seemed too well to justify the common slander that Mrs. Redwood kept her family on short allowance for a week preceding this annual festival, lest, perchance, some one of the dishes should not receive its full share of attention. Mrs. Moody, from her post of observation, saw where the battle raged the fiercest; and, perceiving the cruel slaughter effected in her ranks by this murderous foe, she presently hastened, like a skillful general, to the rescue. With her she brought a doughty dish of doughnuts, with which she hoped for a

while to stay the advances of the enemy; but this force being routed in a twinkling, she was compelled to call to her aid a mighty ham, behind whose ponderous bulk the lighter troops, consisting of sundry pies and tarts, made a desperate rally, and finally drove the enemy off the field. Peter, however, still lingered a moment, to stuff the pockets of his roundabout with doughnuts, which he performed with a degree of dexterity that elicited the unbounded admiration of all who witnessed the operation.

"Ah! my children," cried the deacon, now rejoining his family, "I am very glad to see that you have so much self-denial. Much better leave the table hungry, than behave like those children yonder, who act as if they had never had any thing before to eat in their lives. Ah! it's Mary Grant! I hardly expected to see her here this evening, I must say, after the crying sin she has so lately committed; but really some folks seem to have no conscience now-a-days."

"What! where?" cried his wife, "you don't mean; well, so she is, here in this very room! and close to us! how can she dare? what could Aunt Rebecca been thinking of? Here, Peter! don't speak to her! don't look at her! I should like to box her ears! impudence! but here comes Aunt Rebecca, I'll see what she has to say about it."

"Here, Squire Buckle! Dr. Edgerly!" cried Jesse Lothrop, beckoning to those gentlemen over the heads of the crowd, "quick! this way, or you'll lose all the fun!"

"What is it?" demanded half a dozen voices.

"Why! Mrs. Redwood is going to pitch into Aunt Rebecca 'bout them plums, and if they don't make the fur fly I'm mistaken."

This announcement was sufficient, for the prowess of the two champions was well known all over the length and breadth of Totemwell; and a little knot of curious spectators soon collected around the scene of the expected encounter. There were some folks in Totemwell blind enough to compare Mrs. Redwood to Aunt Rebecca, but there were hardly ever two persons really more unlike. To begin with their personal appearance, Aunt Rebecca was tall and gaunt, but her frame and features were both of a massive scale that sorted well with the narrow and bigoted, but still im-

posing character of her understanding. No one could help feeling a sort of respect for her sturdy independence and inflexibility of will, even while secretly laughing at her folly, or smarting under her intolerant and exacting temper.

Madam Redwood, on the contrary, if she had been sufficiently old and ugly, would have admirably agreed with the popular notions of a witch. Her features, otherwise not uncomely, were pinched and contracted, as if the skin had been drawn too tightly over rather scanty material; or as if, and this was what the village gossips affirmed, she had so dried up her blood by rigid fasting, that the whole of it was needed to nourish her heart and other vital organs, and it was only on occasion of some abundant feasting like the present, that a single drop ever found its solitary way through the untraveled veins that led to her nose and chin. Her usual expression was not, however, as might be inferred from this description, peevish or ill-tempered; it was rather sharp and watchful, what a Yankee or a weasel would call wide-awake, and left an unpleasant impression upon the beholder, as if, instead of a soul, the restless eye and untiring body were animated by a galvanic battery.

"Good evening! Miss Rebecca!" said Mrs. Redwood, like a little piece of flint.

"Good evening! Mrs. Redwood!" replied Aunt Rebecca, like a great lump of granite.

"You've brought Mary Wallace with you, I see," said Mrs. Redwood, "that's Aunt Bethany's doings, I suppose."

"Not at all;" replied Aunt Rebecca, "I brought her myself, sister Bethany had nothing to do with it."

"You did!" cried Mrs. Redwood, pretending to be very much amazed at this disclosure.

"Yes!" replied Aunt Rebecca, pretending in turn not to notice her amazement.

"I thought you were always very strict with children."

"So I am," replied Aunt Rebecca; "my parents were always very strict with me, and I thank them for it; in my opinion, it's the only way to make a useful and excellent character."

"And yet you let that girl come to a party, after all she's been doing; and eat all sorts o' good things, when she ought to be kept on bread and water for a month; and

so she should, if I had the handling of her; to steal my plums, when I hadn't but just twenty-eight in all, and I'd counted 'em that very morning! I say it's shameful, and I don't care who hears it; it's shameful! shameful! and I wonder *at* you, Miss Rebecca."

"I wonder at *you*, Mrs. Redwood! and so, I see, do all the rest of the company, to hear you talk so absurdly, so little like a rational being, so much like a child, indeed. I always knew you were entirely ignorant on all the fundamental questions of morality and human nature, but I didn't really suppose you could be quite so simple. Excuse my plainness and sincerity; but my dear Mrs. Redwood! if you only knew how very ridiculous you make yourself appear, whenever you undertake to argue such matters, I'm sure you'd be more cautious in future."

"Good leather!" whispered Jesse aside to Squire Buckle, "ain't she a scorcher? but I like to hear her talk, she reels it off so easy like; Parson Bennett can't hold a candle to her; but see! the deacon's getting ready to make a speech; you can always tell when it's coming by the way he wriggles."

"Really! Miss Rebecca," began the deacon, while his wife was too much overcome to utter a syllable, "you should administer your reproofs with a little more gentleness and forbearance, for you know all havn't the same talents and knowledge that you possess, and there's probably no one in the village from whom they would feel a rebuke so quick as they would from you. My wife, I know, has an infinite respect for your understanding, as well as myself, in all matters; and in none more than in the management of children. We have often spoken of the admirable way in which you have brought up the two committed to your charge, and that makes it more surprising that a person of your well-known discretion should have ventured upon a step that cannot help giving an unfavorable impression to those who do not know you as well as I do."

Squire Moody and Mr. Bennett, who had joined the circle while the deacon was speaking, now looked this way and that for an explanation; which, when Aunt Rebecca saw, she turned all sorts of colors, for every moment threatened a discovery of her secret; but, presently recovering herself,

she replied with spirit, "People that live in glass houses. Deacon Redwood! should not throw stones."

"True, my dear madam, but people will talk you know, so it's as well to give them no more occasion than we can help. But aside from any such motives, drawn from mere policy, which I know you despise, your well-known candor and magnanimity would, I should suppose, prompt you to an explanation of what now seems so inconsistent with your usual character."

Thus spoke the peace-loving deacon, anxious, if possible, to heal the breach his wife had created, and for this reason, avoiding any application of Aunt Rebecca's remarks to himself; while he skillfully applied the flattery he knew she loved more than any other. But Aunt Rebecca broke through his meshes like a wasp out of a spider's web; or, to return to the metaphor contained in the familiar proverb she had before quoted against him, she now, without any more ado, threw the very biggest kind of a stone right through his front parlor window, with such a tremendous clatter that the deacon, however he might desire it, could no longer remain in ignorance of the catastrophe.

"Candor yourself! Deacon Redwood!" she cried, drawing up her tall, gaunt figure, with all the dignity of twenty yards of silk and buckram, "and what explanation can you give why you have brought that young"—liar, she would have said, but her native propriety forbade—"Peter, of yours, with you?"

"My Peter!" cried the deacon, now a little excited in his turn, "I hope you don't mean to insinuate that he is capable of such conduct. My dear Peter! come here and tell me which is the eighth commandment."

"Thou shalt not steal!" replied Peter, fumbling the doughnuts in his pockets, and looking very foolish.

"There!" cried the deacon, "you hear that, Mr. Bennett! what have you to say to that, Miss Rebecca?"

"A thief at the gallows might say as much," replied Miss Rebecca; "but if it's not too much trouble, I should like to hear him repeat the ninth also."

"The ninth!" repeated the deacon, "let me see, Peter! what is the ninth commandment?"

Thus adjured, the boy hesitated and stammered, but

finally answered, boldly, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

"Oh!" said Aunt Rebecca, "that's it, is it? well!

"You are satisfied then, are you?" said the deacon.

"Perfectly!" replied Aunt Rebecca with a sardonic smile.

"But I am not," said Mr. Bennett, "I don't seem exactly to get hold of the point of dispute. Has my little Mary really been guilty of theft?"

"She can answer that question best herself," said the deacon.

Miss Rebecca bit her lips; the squire looked anxious and uneasy; but the minister, calling the little girl to him, inquired if it were really true, what he had heard but did not believe, that she had been stealing. It was a hard moment for poor Mary. There was the kind-hearted farmer waiting impatiently for her reply, and the good minister: she could not bear that either of them should think badly of her; but she remembered poor Philip, and her promise to Aunt Rebecca, and hesitated. While thus she stood, a beautiful picture of fear, and doubt, and distress, and Aunt Rebecca could not make up her mind to come to her relief, Philip, who had crept up unperceived and saw how matters stood, pulled the minister by his coat tail and timidly whispered the truth.

"I said so! I said so!" burst out Squire Moody, who had also heard Philip's avowal; "who was right, Miss Rebecca? you or I? I believe some folks have as much penetration as other folks; and—well! well! never mind, we're all liable to mistakes; lucky no worse came of it! come here Mary and give me a kiss, there's a good girl. As for you master Phil! I've half a mind to give you a sound flogging for frightening us so; but here's something you'll perhaps like quite as well," giving him a huge handful of raisins, "so mind you never do so again!"

"What!" cried Mrs Redwood, with an inarticulate sound of rage, and starting forward as if she would tear Philip limb from limb, "so it was you stole my plums! was it? and you dare to tell me of it to my very face! oh! you young villain! and your father a minister! seventeen plums, more'n half of all there was on the tree! Shameful! shame-

ful! I wonder they hadn't choked you, every one of 'em, and I wish to goodness they had! 'twould ha' been a mercy to the world, I'm sure; you'll come to the gallows if you live long enough, I know."

"I didn't take but seven," replied Philip.

"Didn't take but seven! oh hear the little liar! when he knows as well as I do that he stole seventeen. Certainly, you are the very worst boy I ever saw!"

"Not quite so bad as that, I hope," cried Dr. Edgerly; "I think I know one at least, almost as bad; he has confessed the seven, and I don't believe he would deny the ten. There would be nothing gained by it, so it would be not only a crime but a folly."

"So you must have your say too, must you?" cried the exasperated virago; "well! what Dr. Edgerly says is law and gospel, I 'spose, to some folks, but I'm thankful I aint one of 'em."

"Yes!" replied the doctor, "gospel to Philip, and the law to Master Peter. I have been waiting, hoping that he would have the grace to make a free confession; but as he chooses to remain silent I must speak for him, or against him, just as you choose to call it. I happened to be in at Mrs. Grant's one day last week, or the week before; and I saw the young gentleman helping himself to those very plums; but as I supposed he had a perfect right to do so, I thought no more of it. So you see, Mrs. Redwood, you will have to modify your assertion somewhat, as to Philip Hastings being so much worse than other boys in this wicked little village of ours."

"I don't see any such thing," cried Mrs. Redwood; "and I don't believe a word of your whole story; it's all—" there is no knowing how much farther she would have gone in her invective; but just then the signal was given for plays to commence in the other room, and instantly all except the deacon and his family hastened to obey the summons.

The games, into which all the young people and not a few of the old now entered with all their heart and soul, were such as had been for many years the favorite pastime of the Totemwellians, and some of them indeed, I have good reason to believe, were indigenous to our little community. Seldom, indeed, in those days, did any number of

young folks get together without spending an hour or more in playing—

"Come, Philanders, let us be a marching,
Every one for his true love sarching;"

Twirling the Platter, Blind-Man's Buff, and other still more abstruse and ingenious divertisements. The pleasure afforded by these sports did not seem to arise so much from any intrinsic merit of their own, as from some mysterious connection between them and an inappreciable number of kisses: that is, to put the proposition into the simplest form, they did not play to play, but they played to kiss; as, with many, the gratification afforded by a hearty dinner consists mainly in the anticipation of the coming cigar. Thus most of our games ended in forfeits, and the forfeits began and ended in kisses. Without some such provision, I am free to confess we should have found the whole thing rather insipid. But oh! the quaint and dainty devices in which our rustic modesty sought to conceal its true purpose, and spare its coquettish blushes! The sibilant kiss was not in our vocabulary; it was altogether too downright and straightforward; we talked only of measuring ribbon—such ribbon, methinks, as Cupid's eyes are bound with; of making sugar bowls, though never sugar bowl contained such sweetness; or of double-and-twisted Lord ha' massies, where the gallant squire kneeling bravely on one knee takes his fair lady on the other, and then—. What then? where then? how then? "Lord, madam!" as Diedrich Knickerbocker says on a similar occasion, "how should I know?"

The games were interrupted, after they had continued several hours, by the appearance of John Moody and Jesse Lothrop, each bearing a huge basket of apples, followed by Becky with a brimming pail of cider. This was distributed among the guests in all sorts of odd shaped cups, bowls, and dippers; but as for the young people, they preferred generally to get together in couples, and drink with straws out of the same vessel. This of course brought their heads in frequent contact; for it happened, oddly enough, that they were both invariably seized with a desire to drink at one and the same moment; and on the whole, of all the ways ever invented for carrying on a little innocent flirtation, I am inclined to give this the palm.

While thus employed, with Miss Lavinia for his partner, the village schoolmaster was surprised by a very demure-looking damsel, who politely requested him to name her apple. Unsuspecting, he complied with many awkward expressions of gallantry savoring strongly of the cloister, when at the first gash made by his knife a stream of water issued forth, which, falling on his nether habiliments, left a mark about the shape of a pancake or slapjack, to the infinite amazement of all the beholders. Not greater wonder seized upon Tancred when, cutting wood in the enchanted forest, he saw a stream of blood flowing from the wounds made by his fatal axe, and heard a voice proceeding from the trunk to reproach him for his cruelty.

After the apples and cider had been discussed, the old folks began to say "Good night!" but the young people returned with undiminished ardor to their games; which I believe they would have kept up till morning if Miss Margaret, at length looking at the clock, had not declared it was almost ten and she thought it was time to go. To tell the truth, it was really much later; some mischievous wag, who was bent on making the most of it, having put back the old clock an hour and a half. Not one of the whole company, however, seemed to have any suspicion of this perfidious conduct; which was indeed remarkable when we consider that the same stratagem had already been tried a dozen times on similar occasions, so that it had become common throughout the village, when speaking of any one distinguished for sluggishness, to say that he was as slow as Squire Moody's clock.

CHAPTER VI.

DR. EDGERLY'S STORY.

PHILIP and Mary, having to their great delight received permission to remain and spend a week at the farm, went to bed fully determined to get up the next morning at a very early hour. It was long after eight, however, before they made their appearance, and then in such a sleepy condition that even the sight of the breakfast the careful mother had prepared for them was hardly able to arouse their drowsy faculties.

The American breakfast, with the exception of the French, is said to be the best in the world. I do not know whether the little group assembled in the farmer's kitchen was aware of this important distinction; but am quite sure that they would not have exchanged the hot buckwheat cakes that now smoked upon the table, the yellow butter, and golden juice of the maple, for the most recherché breakfast ever prepared by Very or Achard. After they had done ample justice to those ambrosial cakes, and washed them down with a foaming bowl of milk, the question arose, what they should do next; and thereupon Lucy Moody, as the eldest of their entertainers, gave a brief summary of the various amusements the farm afforded. I cannot stop, however, to narrate their adventures. Suffice it to say, that the breakfast was but a sample of the day, and every moment was better than the last.

On coming in to supper, they found Dr. Edgerly sitting in one corner of the fireplace, and gazing abstractedly into the glowing coals.

As the flame rose and fell round the dying embers, it lighted up a face that could not perhaps be called handsome, and might even be considered positively ugly by the young ladies of Troy seminary. It was one of those faces

that ought never to be painted, much less daguerreotyped; which should never be seen asleep, or with its eyes shut; never, in short, except when illuminated, as in the present instance, from without by the flickering light of a flame, or by the flickering light of genius within.

As she heard her husband's voice before the door, Mrs. Moody lost no time in setting the supper upon the table; and calling her guest, she good-humoredly reproached him for his taciturnity, and inquired the subject of his thoughts. The doctor started from his revery, and rising from his chair walked once or twice across the room; while, in answer to Mrs Moody's question he repeated a few lines of what seemed to be poetry, but in so low a tone that she could catch only a few words.

"Cross and wild!" repeated the lady, with a bewildered stare, "why Dr. Edgerly! what in the world is the matter? you look wild enough, to be sure, and a little cross, may be; but a hot dish of tea 'll soon make you right as a top, as my good man says; come sit down, the folks 'll be in directly."

Thus adjured, the doctor drew his chair to the table; the squire came in and exchanged a friendly greeting with his guest; and even the children, those nice observers, plainly testified by their sparkling eyes, their satisfaction at his presence.

At first all were too intent upon satisfying the calls of hunger to pay much attention to idle compliment. The farmer inquired the news of the day, and communicated in turn the exact state of the crops, and the probability of an early winter. But when this important operation was fairly over, the table cleared away, and the field open for action, they gradually became engaged in deeper and more complicated questions. "I remember," cried the doctor, in reference to some point in dispute, "I remember the year when this event took place, from the fact that it was the same year that I returned from France."

"How!" cried Mrs. Moody, who sat a silent, but not uninterested witness of the argument, "and have you really and truly been in France? I remember hearing Colonel Totling say something of the sort one day, when I stepped into his store to buy a pound of tea and a few skeins of silk; it's the same tea we've just been drinking; he'd just

got a new lot fresh from Boston; and Squire Buckle was there, and one or two others; and I remember now, it's strange I never thought of it before, Colonel Totling said something about your having been in France, but I didn't pay much attention to it at the time; in fact I was busy thinking what pattern I'd have my new calico; and, I declare, it's odd enough, if this isn't the very one I've got on now! how things will turn up sometimes! but so you've really been in France! well, it must be vastly amusing! How did you contrive to get along without knowing the language?"

"Yes!" replied the doctor, like one talking to himself, while a slight shade of melancholy passed over his features, as if at some painful recollection, "I have been in France; it is certainly true; I ought to remember it well; it is just ten years next June, since I landed at New York on my return."

"I wonder you didn't learn to dance while you were there!" cried Mrs. Moody, with a roguish twinkle, as if the idea of the doctor's dancing suggested some humorous or ridiculous fancy; "but why can't you tell us all about your adventures? I'm sure they must be vastly interesting."

"That's a good idea!" cried the farmer, "and begin at the beginning, so that we may know the whole on't as you go along. Here, Martha!" he called to his eldest daughter, "fetch us a basket of apples and a pitcher of cider! Dr. Edgerly is going to tell us a long story, and 'll want something to whet his whistle; and, Jesse! suppose you run out to the wood-yard, and bring in the biggest log you can find; there's nothing like a good fire these cold nights."

The cider was brought and put upon the table, the log was snugly lodged against the chimney in a glowing bed of coals, an armful of smaller sticks was piled in front, and now the ardent flame wound its long pliant arms through every opening, and seemed to lock the whole in its embraces. They pushed their chairs farther back from the fire, and, for a few moments, watched its movements in silent satisfaction. "Well!" at length cried the squire, "that's what I call clear comfort! Now for the story!" and, with an expressive gesture, he warned the children to be quiet. The

doctor's feeble objections were easily overcome, and, after a short pause, he began as follows:

"It is a long story, and I am afraid, a dull one; but I will try to make it as short as possible. I was born, perhaps you know, in a small country town in the interior of New Hampshire. As my father's salary as minister, was insufficient for the support of rather a numerous family, he was obliged to increase it by cultivating a small farm attached to the parsonage. Most of the labor was performed by myself and my brothers, so that we had little time for study during the summer; but we were sent every winter to the village school, where we learned to read and write, and acquired some knowledge of arithmetic and geography. It was the same school-house in which Daniel Webster commenced his education, and his name was carved on the desk I occupied, in rude, deep letters. I remember I cut my own name just below it, and wondered whether it would ever become as famous as his. I had a lurking superstition that, perhaps, as we had occupied the same seat, and carved our names on the same desk, our future fortunes might also be similar. My vanity will appear more excusable if you consider that at that time Mr. Webster had not attained the commanding position he now occupies, though his reputation, even then, was no longer confined to New England, but had become the property of the country at large.

"I had, from the time I learned to read, a great fondness for books; and, as my father's library was unable to satisfy my thirst, I borrowed all in the village that bore any relation to my favorite subjects. Before I was fourteen, I had read all the medical works belonging to the village doctor; and, though there was of course much in them that I did not fully understand, yet I comprehended enough to arouse an earnest desire to know more; and it was then that the idea of studying medicine first presented itself to my mind. My father had determined to give one of his sons at least a liberal education; and, as I had displayed a greater aptitude for learning than either of my brothers, the choice fell upon me. I had sufficient caution to say nothing about my favorite scheme of studying medicine, as I knew it would prove a sore disappointment to my father, who had set his heart upon seeing me in his own sacred calling. When

the question arose where I should be sent to school, my father proposed an academy in a neighboring town; but I remembered that Daniel Webster had been sent to Exeter; and, from a whimsical determination to have as many points of resemblance to him as possible, I urged so strongly my reasons in favor of that place that my father at length consented.

"From Exeter I was transferred, at the usual time, to Dartmouth College. As my father was ill able to bear this additional expense, I did my utmost to relieve him of the burden by keeping a country school. You will, I'm afraid, think me very absurd; but, to tell the truth, nothing could have ever removed my repugnance to this occupation, but the consoling reflection that my illustrious example had also been compelled to resort to the same expedient. Perhaps, too, you will wonder that with him so constantly before my eyes, I should have chosen the comparatively obscure profession of medicine, instead of the far more brilliant profession of law, in which alone I could ever hope to rival his distinction. But, though I might have been very well satisfied with the theory, the practice of it, I knew, would never suit my temperament. My ambition went no farther than to be among physicians what he was among statesmen; and to secure this end, I thought nothing more was required than unflagging zeal and application. I already looked forward to the time when I should stand at the head of my profession, and pleased myself with the thought of the benefits I was about to confer upon my fellows. I don't know how it is," said the doctor slowly, and with the air of a man attempting to solve a puzzling question, "I have often tried to account for my want of success, but never to my satisfaction. Of course, it must be my own fault, and yet I know of men who, without half the labor and study that I have bestowed, have become distinguished, yes, ornaments of their profession and lights of science, as I read this morning in a Boston paper;" and the doctor sighed.

"However, as I said, I left college several weeks before the close of the fall term of my sophomore year, and went to keep school in a small town about twenty miles from Hanover. It was not very easy for one whose thoughts were constantly bent on one subject, to submit to the daily

drudgery of this life—of all others the most intolerable; but I comforted myself with the expectation of the future, which was to repay me for all these vexations. Among my pupils was a young lady, or, to speak more correctly, a young girl, the daughter of the village physician. She was not at that time more than fourteen years of age, but even then was distinguished among all her companions not only by her beauty but also by a certain grace of mind as well as person. I was often at her father's house, attracted by similarity of pursuits, though there was really very little harmony between us.

"He was really a skillful physician, and had learned much, both from reading and from observation, yet had no true love for his profession. It was all done in the way of business. He laughed at my enthusiasm; and when I once ventured to hint something about the dignity of the science, he said, 'What do I care about the dignity of the science? Believe me, my young friend, you'll want something more substantial to live on than either science or dignity. I advise you to get rid of all such impracticable notions as soon as possible. When you are once fairly established, it will be time enough to think of such things; but at present all you have to do is to look out for a good practice. A good practice, mark me, is the first, second, and third requisite in medicine; the rest are all luxuries, which very few, let me tell you, can ever afford.'

"I was silenced but not convinced by his arguments; and I inwardly repeated my resolve that the dignity of the science should never suffer in my keeping. I have since thought that perhaps, after all, I might have been mistaken, and that my success would have been more satisfactory if my notions had been less elevated.

"The next winter, and the next, still found me teaching in the same place, and each time Fanny Fielding appeared more attractive and engaging. She now no longer attended my school; but my frequent visits at her father's, for whom, notwithstanding the want of sympathy in my favorite opinions, I had yet a sincere regard, threw us often into each other's society. What first awakened my interest in her, was her evident leaning to my side of the question, when I was arguing with her father on the dignity of the science,

and other matters of a like nature. I discovered this partiality not from any open declaration—for she was too modest to offer her opinion—but from certain smiles and other notes of approbation whenever I said any thing particularly to the point. My soul was at that time so wrapt up in my chosen profession that I believe there was no other way to come at my heart than that she, undesignedly indeed, fell into. However, it was not long before I began to find other and more potent reasons for transferring my devotion: having once admitted this new passion, it quickly mastered all the rest, and before I knew what was coming, I found myself helplessly drawn into the giddy whirl. And now, if I could hope to do her justice, I would draw her portrait as she appeared to me that morning when—. To say that she was beautiful, would be the least of her praise; anybody could see that at a moment. I sometimes wished it was not quite so apparent—it seemed to give others a share in her perfections, when I would rather have kept them all to myself. I always thought her peculiar charms lay in the perfect womanliness of her nature. Her virtues and her faults, if she had any—though I'm sure I never knew what they were—were such as are the inalienable birthright of her sex. If she had borrowed any quality from ours, it was certainly found in a larger proportion of good common-sense than commonly falls to the lot of her sisters."

At this remark the squire nodded sagaciously at his wife, with an approving gesture, as who should say, "There! old lady, I hope you'll remember that!"

"Oh, yes!" returned Mrs. Moody, "I know well enough what you'd be at; you men will allow us any thing sooner than common-sense; I'm sure you're heartily welcome to it, but after all, we manage to get along without it quite as well as some folks that pretend to have the most."

Dr. Edgerly improved this interruption by drinking a mug of cider, after which, he continued as follows:

"Neither of her parents offered any objection to the match, though her father laughingly declared he was afraid the dignity of the science would hardly furnish us with bread and butter, to say nothing of less essential matters. However, we were both too well satisfied with each other to regard his raillery; and indeed, for my own part, I would

gladly have been married in a week, though I had not a dollar in the world; but to this I knew Dr. Fielding would never consent, even if I could prevail upon my darling Fanny to take so foolish a step. It was accordingly decided that we should wait till I had been settled at least a year, by which time I was sanguine enough to believe I should be in possession of a lucrative practice. After leaving Hanover, I returned to B. to continue the study of my profession with my future father. But my thoughts were no longer so exclusively devoted to one pursuit; even the dignity of the science had lost much of its importance, and I found myself dreaming of Fanny, when I should have been hard at work on anatomy and physiology. If I took my book into my own room, I heard her voice singing in the garden or at her household cares; if I walked into the woods, I was sure to see her white dress glancing among the trees. After living in this way a month, I made a prodigious effort and removed my lodgings to another house, and my mind was thus restored to somewhat of its former tranquillity. About this time an uncle of my mother's died, leaving each of us quite unexpectedly a few hundred dollars. By means of this seasonable aid, I was enabled to complete my studies without further interruption, and obtain my degree. But while at Cambridge, my old thirst for distinction was revived in all its force. One of my acquaintance was going to Paris, and urged me to accompany him. He represented so strongly the advantages that would arise from such a step, that I at length consented. But when I came to lay the matter before Fanny and her father, she pleaded so warmly against it as almost to overcome my resolution. Indeed, I think I should have yielded, had not her father for once taken my side of the question and thrown his influence into the opposite scale. In an evil hour, I set out from B. Something seemed to whisper that I was about to make shipwreck of all my happiness; and more than once I was on the point of returning to announce my change of purpose, but shame prevented. I joined my friend in Boston, and in a few days we set sail for Havre. Nothing remarkable occurred during our voyage, but the novelty of my situation and the pleasing change of objects I now met with gradually dispelled the melancholy fancies that oppressed me.

"This was even more the case when we arrived in France. Here the stranger is assailed with novelty at every sense. The eye is first attracted by the different style of building and the hoary antiquity of many of the houses, that look as if they had locked up in them the story of a thousand years. They, apparently, have no more to do with the present than the crumbling monuments of a church-yard, or than some dreaming veteran who has long since forgotten all save the events of his childhood. The door opens, and, instead of the richly dressed nobleman of the age of the great Louis, appears a modern fine gentleman with his tight coat and shiny hat. The mind receives a shock at this incongruity, similar to what it would experience at seeing the laughing face of a child peering from out its grandfather's sober raiment.

"Then, there are the carriages of different descriptions, but all unlike our own—the postillion with his clumsy jack-boots urging on the unhappy horses that drag the unwieldy diligence, *lucus a non lucendo*, and the numberless indescribable foreign sights and sounds and smells that meet one at every step.

"But nothing after all, simple as it may seem, affected me so strangely as the ease and fluency with which even the little children talked French. It is their own language to be sure, and there is nothing wonderful in it any more than for our children to talk English; yet it always seemed odd and unaccountable to hear a little girl, no bigger than Mary there, rattling away as if it were the easiest thing in the world, while I could hardly pronounce a sentence without a dozen blunders. I have since met with the same observation in some distinguished author, who wrote home to a friend in England 'that in France even the little children talked French.'"

"Well," cried Mrs. Moody, "that is very odd, I do declare! I always supposed the grown men and women talked French of course, but as for the children, it seems more natural that they should talk English, like everybody else. Poor things! how hard it must be for them to learn!"

"Why," cried her husband rather impatiently, "what difference does it make whether they learn French or English? its their own language, and they never hear any other.

You might as well expect our Susan to go to jabbering French, as for them to talk English."

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Moody, "so it is; I never thought of that; but, after all, it does seem more natural that they should talk English—French is such an outlandish language."

Dr. Edgerly smiled good-naturedly at this little bit of simplicity, and then resumed his story.

"I could not avoid the impression that I had come to the worst place in the world to study medicine; for, as the Parisians appeared more insensible to the idea of death than any people I had ever seen, it seemed but natural to conclude that they would not be very solicitous about the means of preserving life. And, indeed, I believe to this day that the most distinguished of the French physicians regard their profession more as an end than a means. They study it not so much from a view of the benefits it may confer, as from an abstract love of science; and they are not so anxious to save the life of a patient, as to learn the true nature of his disease. I have often thought, that they went to work with their patients as a chemist does with a substance the properties of which he wishes to ascertain. They subject them to the action of one agent after another, and form their conclusion from the several results. Of course, it sometimes happens that the life of the patient is sacrificed through this analyzing process; but what then? he is a happy man who has been able by his death to advance the cause of science; and surely, this is far more reasonable than for thousands to expose themselves to far greater sufferings, to advance the glory of one man, who uses them only as instruments of his ambition. However, it is perhaps owing to this reckless disregard of human life, that the French physicians are enabled to make such important contributions to our medical knowledge; just as Napoleon was said to be a conqueror at the rate of ten thousand men a day.

"Mr. Betson, my traveling companion, was liberally provided with money, while I was obliged to practice the most rigid economy. As this rendered it inconvenient to remain together, we parted soon after our arrival in Paris, with mutual assurances of good will, and I took lodgings,

or apartments, as they are called, in the fifth story of an old and massive building, in the Rue de la Paix. Having settled myself as comfortably as I could in my narrow quarters, I lost no time in waiting upon the gentleman to whom I had been recommended, and delivering my letter of introduction. I found him nearly as high up in the world as myself; and, indeed, the whole appearance of his lodging seemed to show that science, while so prodigal of her own peculiar rewards, had been unable to give him any more substantial marks of her favor. I had been informed that Dr. Grandpre was a very eccentric individual, but was wholly unprepared for the figure that now presented itself. After knocking at his door several times, without receiving any answer, a rather squeaking voice bid me enter, which I did without farther ceremony. I found myself in a large room, dimly lighted by three dusty windows, which gave a still more fanciful and grotesque appearance to objects of themselves sufficiently strange and startling. Two sides of the apartment were occupied by tall, drowsy looking cases, containing the doctor's library and his anatomical preparations, which I afterwards learned formed the most valuable private collection in Paris. Everything was in the most extraordinary confusion; the chairs and tables were covered with books and vials, and surgical instruments; in the windows were two or three cages, containing several mice and a large rat; and a gigantic skeleton grinned behind the door.

"The doctor himself was sitting at a small table, apparently deeply engaged in some scientific experiment. He was a tall, spare man, one of that class who seem to have made a bargain with time that by sacrificing all their youth, they shall never exhibit the tokens of extreme old age. It seemed to me at the time, that he had been as old as he was then for twenty years, and would probably be no older if he should live for twenty years to come. His feet were thrust into huge yellow slippers, and the small Turkish cap he wore on the back of his head, left exposed his high, bunchy forehead, and eyes like dusty, cobwebbed windows. On the opposite side of the table sat a skeleton, evidently intended to represent the king of terrors. The glistening skull was surmounted with a paper crown, and the right

hand held in its nerveless grasp the dart, the symbol of his power.

"On a nearer approach, I discovered that the surface of the table had been formerly used as a chess board, and the squares, red and yellow, were still distinguishable through the thick coating of dust that encrusted them. I at once detected the doctor's conceit; he had represented his contest with death under the allegory of a game of chess, either from the promptings of his own fancy, or in imitation of Retsch's famous picture of the young man playing with Satan for his soul. Two of the legs of his chair having probably been broken, he had supplied their place with bones from the human thigh. The back was formed in the same quaint fashion; but, instead of having recourse to the human skeleton, he had made use of the ribs of a horse, probably because those of a man would not have been large enough for the purpose. He rose on my entrance, and having cleared a chair of its contents by tilting them all on to the floor, motioned to me to be seated, and then politely inquired the nature of my errand. There was a nervous twitching about the muscles of the mouth, and an involuntary glance at the work he had just quitted, that seemed to say, 'I wish people would let me alone, and not be forever troubling me with their foolish complaints!' so I made my story as brief as possible, and concluded by handing him my letter of introduction. It was from an old friend of his, who had made his acquaintance many years before, when both were young men just entering on the study of their profession. When he had read it, he looked at me earnestly, with more of human sympathy in his withered countenance than I had supposed it capable of expressing. My letter had opened to him the fountain of youthful recollections, and his thirsty soul that had so many years fed only on the dry husks of his profession, drank eagerly of the sparkling stream. 'Yes! yes!' he murmured, with a gentle motion of the head, 'I remember my old friend Deek Weelliams very well. Twenty, thirty, forty years, that was before the emperor's time; yes! forty years ago; it is a long time! he must be an old man; does he look as old as I?'

I told him, what was the truth, that Dr. Williams looked both older and younger than himself; at which he laughed,

and going to one of his cases brought me a miniature skeleton that looked as if it might have been brought from Lilliput.

"'There,' said he, 'that was made by Deek Weelliams, with a pen-knife, forty years ago; and when he went back to America he gave it to me, as a keepsake. Ah! he was a good fellow, and must always have his joke. We used to laugh some then, and those were no laughing days, either.'

"He restored the memorial to its place, and stood looking at it a few moments, lost in thought; but when he turned his face again to the window, all appearance of emotion had vanished, and he was as dry and lifeless almost as the skeleton by his side.

"During my stay in Paris I became very intimate with this extraordinary character; and the more I saw of him, the more extraordinary he seemed. No one, perhaps, ever treated his patients with greater tenderness; but I always thought that this arose not from any thing that could properly be called sympathy or compassion, but simply from that sort of interest one naturally feels in whatever has cost him much care or labor. I could not discover that he loved a single human being; the only object upon which he seemed to have bestowed his affections was a pet raven as old and almost as ugly as himself.

"I never saw this ill-omened bird perched on his master's shoulder and eating from his hand or mouth, without fancying that Dr. Grandpre was a magician, and this attendant his familiar. But Dr. Grandpre was neither selfish nor unamiable. The time had long past—indeed I knew not then that it had ever been—when he had felt the stirrings of love or hatred, envy or ambition, or any of those passions in which the lives of most of us consist. What use, I said to myself, can such a being have for a heart? or for a conscience? Is there any moral character to his acts, involving any accountability? Is he any thing more than a machine, which still retains the motion communicated to it by a force that has long since ceased to operate?

"The soul of this man seemed to me like one of those old palaces I have mentioned, whose numerous and splendid apartments had once been filled with life and gaiety, but were now naked and desolate, save that perhaps in some

obscure corner of the building, the solitary survivor of a noble race still maintained a hold upon the home of his fathers. In spite, however, of this mental paralysis I found myself irresistibly attracted towards the old man; and he in turn began to look upon me as a necessary part of his existence, and would perhaps have missed me nearly as much as the skeleton that had so long waited for him at his little table. He seemed so entirely the creature of habit, and the habit of life in him was so strong, that I sometimes wondered how he could ever die; and then again I wondered if he were not already dead, and the flesh by some mysterious power forever fastened to his bones.

"These thoughts were pleasant companions for a winter's evening, when the wind shook the old building so that the skeleton rattled in his chair, and I was sometimes half in doubt whether the voice I heard proceeded from his fleshless jaws or from the shriveled lips of his antagonist.

"One of Dr. Grandpre's strangest habits related to his dress. He from time to time provided himself with an entire suit of clothes, which he wore constantly as long as they would hold together. His regularity was so great in this respect, that his neighbors used it as a measure of time, and would say that such a thing happened on the day that Dr. Grandpre got his new suit, or about the time the first patch was put on the doctor's elbow. When I first made his acquaintance he had long past this period, and the different patches on his coat, like the successive layers in the trunk of a tree, plainly declared its age. Soon after, on going early one morning to his lodgings, he surprised me by presenting himself in his butterfly dress. He seemed, however, utterly unconscious of the change, striking as it was, and divers stains upon his nether garments confirmed this suspicion.

"Among my friend's patients at this time was a poor weaver, who had a numerous family dependent upon him for support. His disease baffled all the doctor's skill. As we were returning one day from a visit to his humble abode, I sought to arouse the doctor's sympathy by reminding him of the destitute condition in which this poor man would leave his wife and children. 'It is,' I said, 'one of the

greatest trials in the lot of a physician that he is obliged to witness so much suffering without the power to relieve.'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'you are right, though we seldom meet with a case so entirely beyond our reach. I thought yesterday, to be sure, that I had at length discovered the exact seat of the disease, but to-day am as much in the dark as ever. It is, as you say, a severe trial; but then,' he added, with some appearance of animation, 'we can have a post-mortem, and that may reward us for all our vexation.'

"'Yes,' I returned, 'but you do not seem to understand me; I was speaking of this poor man's family, and the sufferings his death must necessarily occasion.'

"'True,' said he, 'I am sorry for them; it must be an affliction not to know the way of his death; but then, as I said, there is still a hope that the post-mortem may give us all the knowledge we desire.'

"'But that knowledge,' I cried, rather impatiently, 'will not keep them from starving, or console them for the loss of a husband and father. We, who have never known the depth of affection belonging to that tender relation, can never sound the depth of their misery.'

"Even as I spoke, Dr. Grandpre turned and looked sharply at me. Were those the eyes, usually so heavy and inexpressive, that seemed always to look on all sides of any object, or else beyond it into space, and never directly at it! I started back, as if I had been walking on a volcano, and involuntarily drew a little farther from my companion. That single brief glance had upset all my calculations. It had revealed an inner nature, of which I had no suspicion—an intensity of feeling and passion that seemed so totally at variance with all I had hitherto seen of the doctor's character, that I could hardly believe it real. But as a single luminous ray streaming from a key hole or a crack shows as certainly that the room is lighted as if we had looked in at an open door, so that gleam of intelligence shot from under his dark eyebrows showed me that his heart was all aglow.

"My friend, as if fearful he had aroused my suspicions, relapsed at once into his usual manner. 'What!' he cried, 'are they so unreasonable! are they so ungrateful to science,

for such an inestimable benefit! But I confess,' he added, 'I am a little superstitious on this point. I always think the man who is put under ground without this important question being settled, offers an insult to our whole fraternity. He has neglected the necessary formalities. He might as well die without receiving extreme unction. What excuse can he give in the other world for his strange and unceremonious departure?'

"I made no reply to this rhapsody, for I was busy with the discovery I had just made; and we walked on in silence. I determined to embrace the first opportunity of learning more of my friend's history, and for this purpose I applied to the only person I had ever seen receive from him any thing more than the merest civilities. He told me 'that Dr. Grandpre had formerly been a very handsome and accomplished gentleman; that many years before, his wife and two lovely children had all died of some mysterious disease; he had at once changed all his habits, given up all his old associations, and devoted himself henceforth entirely to his profession. He was master of an independent fortune; but instead of living in the luxury to which he had been accustomed, he had retired to the mean abode where he now resided, and expended the whole of his income, except what was required for his own moderate wants, in supplying the necessities of the sick and destitute families in his neighborhood. And he does it all,' added my informant, 'with the utmost secresy, and seems really annoyed if detected in any of these acts of charity. The world regards him as a miser and misanthrope; and even those who judge less harshly, find him guilty of insensibility and an utter want of human sympathy—how justly, I need not tell you, after what you already know of his character.'

"I thanked the gentleman for his information, and went away deeply affected by this picture of human suffering. I reproached myself for the unworthy and injurious opinion I had formed of this most estimable character, and for the blindness that had kept me so long in ignorance of his true goodness. My manner must have been very different from usual, for he seemed to notice a change; but I could not tell whether it gave him most pleasure or pain. I wondered now, that I had ever thought him cold or insensible; his

face reminded me of one of the mellow days of autumn, and there was a warmth in his eye like the ripe warmth of the sun lovingly lingering through our Indian summer. By some mysterious sympathy, he had become aware of my feelings, and now there was a struggle between his pride and his affections, which should gain the mastery. He wished still to carry on the deception, still to continue the part he had so long acted; and perhaps he was afraid, after his bitter experience, to venture his all of happiness on the frail bark of one mortal existence. The loss of friends by death, or their own unfaithfulness, brings with it no greater evil than this fear or suspicion, which often prevents us from loving another lest he, too, should be taken from us. But whatever may have been the cause of the old man's thus doing violence to his feelings, it yielded to the effects of time; and the ardor with which he now returned my affection, was the hoarded passion of long years of mortification and self-denial. That harsh exterior protected the tenderest sensibility. It was as if a woman's soul, with its delicate instincts and nice appreciation of others' feelings, had been engrafted on to man's hardier stock; or as if man's rude and savage climate had been tempered by the reflection from her brighter skies.

"And, as is always the case with the noblest natures, I found that the way to his head lay through his heart. As long as the latter was closed, there was no way of access to the former. But now that his heart was opened once more for the reception of its former guests; and, the cheerful sunlight once more admitted into its deserted halls, the various powers of his mind—his wit, fancy, memory, recovering from their long torpidity, shone out in all their holiday attire. It is true, that like their master, they were something odd, and quaint, and old-fashioned. They wore the dress, not of the present, but of thirty years before. It was of those days the old man loved to talk. He looked upon the intervening period as an ugly dream, and used playfully to assert that he was really only a little over thirty years of age, and that I had restored to him that youth of which he had been defrauded. I had all along supposed Dr. Grandpre an enthusiast in medical science, but now I was surprised to find how little reason there was for this belief. It was

precisely because he had no fondness for it, that he had devoted himself to its pursuit. He had chosen it without affection, and he now abandoned it without regret.

"You may easily conjecture that this change in his habits was not very favorable to my progress in my profession. It was so much pleasanter to sit and listen for hours together to his eager, impassioned narrative of the events of his youth, or to compare our opinions on literature and philosophy, and other favorite subjects, than to wander through the wards of the hospitals and listen to the dull dogmas of one celebrated physician, and then to the conflicting opinions of another, equally dull, equally celebrated, and equally confident! Whenever I felt any uneasiness at this mode of spending my time, I excused myself with the plea that it was no more than my duty required, to do all in my power to make the small remainder of his life pleasant to one who had been so sublimely wretched. Besides, I thought, it was perhaps, after all, quite as profitable to study the operations of a strong and highly original intellect under the pressure of adverse fortune, as to learn the nature and the treatment of bodily diseases.

"But this state of things was not to last long. Dr. Grandpre might have continued to exist, he could hardly be said to live, in the half-torpid state in which I found him; but there was not vital energy in his system sufficient to meet the demands of his awakened powers. The oil which might support a feeble blaze for many hours is consumed at once when the light burns with all its intensity. His death was like the going out of a candle, gradually growing dimmer and dimmer till it is no longer distinguishable from the surrounding darkness, then expiring with a sudden gleam. I was with him to the last, and had the satisfaction of knowing that the consolations of friendship which he had so long been deprived of, shone with their fullest luster on his dying moments. He talked much at this time of his wife and children, and repeatedly expressed the happiness he felt in the full assurance of their speedy reunion.

"After his death, it was found on examining into the state of his affairs, that very little property remained. As his personal expenses could not have exceeded five thousand francs per annum, while his estate would have

yielded originally ten times that amount, it was concluded that he had expended during the last thirty years, not only the excess of his income, but also nearly his whole capital, in hidden charity. This suspicion was confirmed when we found among his papers a long list of names of different individuals, with the sums that, from time to time, had apparently been bestowed for their relief. On inquiry of some of those with whom we happened to be acquainted, I learned that they had regularly received, in some cases for many years, small sums of money from an unknown hand, which they had never been able to discover. When I assured them that Dr. Grandpre had been this mysterious benefactor, it was long before I could gain their belief; but on a more particular statement of the circumstances which had come to my knowledge, their incredulity vanished, and was succeeded by the most earnest expressions of surprise and gratitude; and thus that affection which my old friend had shunned in his life, was reserved to honor his death."

Dr. Edgerly here paused to drink another mug of the farmer's cider, and then prepared to continue his story; but looking at the clock, he declared he had no idea it was so late, and he had several things to do that evening. He promised, however, to call again and finish his story as soon as he could, Mrs. Moody assuring him that she shouldn't be easy till she heard that he got safe home again out of that horrid country, and also how that poor dear Fanny got along in his absence. As he turned away from the door, the racking clouds suddenly obscured the moon, and a passing gust strewed the path before him with fallen leaves. Behind him was the cheerful light of the farmer's window, growing more and more feeble as he moved away, and before him lay stretching, as it seemed, endlessly out, the cold, dark night. He felt the full force of the contrast, and sighed as he thought how apt an emblem it afforded of his own life.

When Mrs. Moody returned to the kitchen, she found the children fast asleep in their chairs, with their heads resting on the table, and her husband raking up the fire for the night. He crowded the brands from the big log down against the chimney, and heaped over them a blanket of glowing coals. Over all he spread carefully a soft coverlid.

of ashes, and then turned the fire-dogs before the pile to watch over its safety. "Come, children! come!" cried Mrs. Moody, shaking Philip by the arm, "the doctor's gone, and we are going to bed. Take good care of your light, and be up early in the morning." The children obeyed, yawning, and rubbing their eyes, and stumbling over every thing that came in their way; the old folks soon followed, and the kitchen was left in total darkness, except the glimmering light of a dying ember that had not been covered with ashes. A profound stillness reigned through all the house, save the steady ticking of the old clock, that now sounded louder than ever. The chairs seemed to draw nearer to the fire; they put their heads together, and nodded sagaciously at each other, like a parcel of old women over their knitting. The lions' faces on the drawers of the old-fashioned side-board winked in a very knowing manner, and a little three-legged table in one corner, that was usually the most stupid piece of furniture in the room, now seemed brim full of fun and mischief. There is no knowing what might have happened; but suddenly the little ember that, like a cunning fiddler, had caused this universal excitement, sent forth one last feeble blaze and expired; whereupon every thing resumed its former gravity, and no one could have discovered any thing to distinguish this kitchen from a hundred other kitchens in the pleasant farming towns of New England. So ended the first day at Squire Moody's.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECOND DAY AT THE FARM.

THE next day was rainy. Philip tried hard to persuade himself that it would clear off before long; and for some time he watched every indication of fair weather with unyielding hope. A small patch of blue sky in the east seemed once to promise that the clouds were about to humor his wishes, and beat a retreat; but instead of this, they presently received a strong reinforcement, and having speedily filled this gap in their ranks, they overspread the whole heavens with their dense masses; the rain poured down faster and faster, till the circles formed by the drops in the little puddles in the road could no longer be distinguished; the little puddles spread wider and wider, and at length their united waters overflowing the pigmy dams made by the cart-wheels, and filling up the ruts, glided along from one side of the road to another in a shallow, muddy current, till they reached the brook already swollen by numberless similar contributions.

Philip at length gave up in despair. "It is really too bad!" he cried, "just because I was going to have such a good time this week, that it should go and rain! But it is always just so! I shouldn't wonder a bit if it rained all the time I was here. If it had waited till I'd got home, I wouldn't have cared."

All this time, Mrs. Moody was waiting for her husband to come in from the barn. Presently, Philip heard the plashy sound of his feet, as he came staggering along, half blinded by the wind and rain. As he opened the outer door, the storm pushed rudely past, and bursting open the door of the kitchen, filled the whole room with the driving mist, then went roaring up the chimney. The farmer threw off his wet coat and muddy boots, and drawing a chair

close up to the hearth, smiled with an air of huge content alternately at the blazing fire, the smoking breakfast, and his comely wife, as if doubting which of them at that moment possessed superior charms. The power of this triumvirate (I beg pardon for the triple misnomer) being so equally divided, it is not to be wondered at that two of them, by uniting, should triumph over the third, or that such a fire should yield to such a breakfast, backed by such a wife.

Let those who will, envy our first father the unclouded sky of Paradise and its eternal spring: there are deeper joys in the frosts and snows of winter, or even in November rain. Philip's ill humor was not proof against the seductive influences of all surrounding him; it showed symptoms of yielding at his first slice of buttered toast, and was fairly vanquished by his last section of pumpkin pie, which advanced boldly to the attack in a cuneiform phalanx, and having effected a lodgment in his stomach, speedily drove out the enemy; another proof, if any were needed, that those philosophers are right who maintain that the seat of the soul is in the belly.

After dinner, the rain fell with a sullen perseverance that left no room for hope. Mrs. Moody, taking compassion on their forlorn condition, gave the children leave to parch some corn by the kitchen fire; and, without waiting for a second bidding, away they all scampered to the store-room. This was a large, unfurnished chamber over the wood-shed, and like similar apartments in old houses, had become a kind of hospital for decayed and superannuated furniture. Here all the three-legged chairs, rickety tables, broken-winded bellows, and all other articles that had been disabled for further service, were accustomed to retire to spend the rest of their days in peace and quiet. Thus, though there might have been here and there something really valuable, the greater part were preserved either in gratitude for their past services, or on the well-known principle that if you keep a thing seven years, you will be sure to find a use for it. This principle, however, though it has passed into a proverb, was far from being justified in the present instance, since most of this trumpery had already slept out the allotted period, and was yet to all appearance, as useless as ever.

Philip felt perhaps quite as much pleasure at the sight of all these antiquities as Belzoni in the midst of the great pyramid, or Layard among the ruins of Nineveh. He had read of the armor of the middle ages, and was not without hopes of lighting upon a rusty breastplate or battered helmet, in his researches. He quite forgot the object of their visit, and roamed curiously about, prying into all the old boxes and hingeless trunks, and creeping on his hands and knees into ghostly-looking corners, till he was nearly smothered with the venerable dust he had disturbed. He found nothing, however, but bits of old carpets, second-hand clothing, old hats and boots and coats, bundles of musty papers, a pair of tongs long since divorced, a spinning-wheel dismounted from its horse, and a blue cotton umbrella without a handle. Once, as he laid his hand on some hollow metal, he trembled with eagerness at the hope that it might be the wished-for armor; but on bringing it to the light, it proved to be nothing but an ancient warming-pan that had lost its lid.

Nothing now remained unexplored except the deep recesses of a chest of drawers, that, as if tired of standing so long on its legs, had fallen flat on its back, and now lay sprawling in helpless obesity, like a huge turtle, or one of those turtle-fed aldermen, who are reputed by the vulgar to live exclusively on this dainty fare; as the gods erewhile were said by the same pleasant fiction to live on nectar and ambrosia, a diet that wanted nothing to recommend it, save the single requisite of variety. This chest of drawers having long since lost nearly all its handles, Philip, after wasting much time in fruitless endeavors to open them in the usual way, was at length compelled to resort to the same expedient as that practiced by the ingenious Mrs. Gamp under similar circumstances; a fact strikingly illustrative of a truth noticed by certain philosophers, that true genius has in all ages hit upon the same means to accomplish its weighty purposes. Having thus with great difficulty succeeded in extricating the upper drawer, he was rewarded for his perseverance by having revealed to his longing eyes an epitome or abstract of the contents of the whole chamber.

Here were the life-long accumulations of some thrifty housewife, now, like herself, laid away and forgotten. Lit-

tle papers of flower seeds, mingled with larger ones of squash and cucumber,—bundles of dried herbs, sage and lavender and pennyroyal,—leaves of mullein, and old bits of flannel, hardly to be told apart—vials of unknown medicines—the bigger half of a pair of snuffers—skeins of yarn, now sadly moth-eaten—and a great variety of articles, whose names, like those of the rank and file of an army, have never been preserved in history. Though Philip was thus disappointed in his search, he yet experienced a sort of satisfaction in thus restoring to the light of day these dusty relics of a brief antiquity. As he opened one hiding place after another, he almost expected to see some genie, like that drawn from the bottom of the lake by the lucky fisherman of the Arabian story, issuing forth in smoke or vapor to reward him for his assistance. But no such event followed. The drowsy company in the drawer merely opened their sleepy eyes, stared at Philip, partly in wonder, partly in indignation, then composed themselves again to their long sleep.

Since they had been thus buried alive, the face of the old grandam earth had received many new wrinkles. Many a generation of sage and lavender; of squash and cucumber, had risen and perished, but still they flourished in perpetual youth. Perhaps some such fancies flitted across the mind of Philip; for he closed the drawer with exceeding gentleness, and, indeed, a certain air of veneration.

When he looked round the old chamber, his companions were gone. They had speedily found what they wanted, and, supposing that he would immediately follow, had returned to the kitchen. As he drew near the door, he heard their merry laughter mingled with the popping of the corn, like irregular discharges of musketry. These sounds of life grated rather harshly on his feelings, after the scenes of sober contemplation he had just quitted; but his spirits soon rose or fell to the level of his companions, and ere long he was the merriest of the whole group.

The next day was Sunday. The rain was over, and the sun shone with unclouded splendor. It seemed as if nature had washed her face and put on her gayest attire, in honor of the day. The frost had begun to paint the trees in all the glowing colors of autumn; and the neighboring hills in

their gaudy livery already heralded the approach of the Indian Summer, whose crispy footsteps might even now be heard on the withered leaves.

Breakfast came later at Squire Moody's on Sunday morning than any other. This did not seem so much the result of design, as of a thousand little unavoidable accidents that interfered with the usual regularity of the household. Either the maids couldn't wake, or the fire wouldn't burn, or the water wouldn't boil, or there was a general conspiracy among the pots and kettles, aided by their lesser brethren, to make as much trouble as they could. I have since noticed the same peculiarity in other families where I have visited, and have hence been led to regret that the sun did not rise an hour or two later on that morning, to save all this useless vexation. If the wood and water, the tea-kettle and frying-pan, that have served us so faithfully all the week, require a little longer rest one day in seven, it is really too bad to deny them, just because that stupid block-head, the sun, can't lie abed an hour or so later than usual. But the senseless varlet has acquired such a character for punctuality, that he would think the world was going to wreck and ruin if he should be a minute behind his time. An ingenious friend of mine, who is rather fond of his morning nap, especially when he has been out late over night, once declared to me that, among all his acquaintance, the sun was the only one who invariably rose early in the morning and went early to bed; and yet, said he, "I never heard him commended for health, or wealth, or wisdom." I was wonderfully struck by this remark, and confess I have hardly thought so well of the sun or of early rising ever since.

On this particular morning, the tiresome old fellow bounced out of bed without a rag of a cloud about him, and flinging his beams directly in the face and eyes of the maid, Becky, woke her from a pleasing dream that eclipsed all the wonders of the crystal-slippered Cinderella. She was naturally highly indignant at this behavior; for, as Shakspeare says, the first bringer of unwelcome news hath but a losing office; and surely if any news can be called unwelcome, it must be to be waked from such a dream to such a reality.

Whether Becky communicated her ill humor to all within her influence, or whether they also had their dreams disturbed, history does not mention; but so it was, that every thing went wrong with her on this unlucky morning. At first the tea-kettle wouldn't boil at all, and when at last it consented, it did so with so much excess of energy that it quite put out the fire; which thereupon spit and spluttered at such a rate that it filled a dish of poached eggs, that was just ready to take up, half full of ashes; so that all had to be done over again. All this, as those at least who have been in similar circumstances will allow, was enough to provoke a saint; and as Becky was no saint, but a little the contrary, she was speedily brought to a state of mind closely verging on despair. At first she flung herself into a chair, and folding her hands in her lap, exclaimed with bitterest emphasis, "Well! every thing else is contrary, I may as well be contrary too!" then casting a look at the clock, she started up, and went tearing about among her refractory subjects, making such a terrible clatter, that even the tea-kettle stood aghast, and the innocent stew-pan, that had been the cause of all this mischief, could hardly stand on its three legs for terror.

So have I seen an enraged pedagogue, whose long-suffering patience had been at length exhausted, rush suddenly among his just-before laughing but now dismayed pupils, and, pouncing upon some unlucky urchin, belabor him soundly for the edification of all the rest, who instantly begin to study for dear life; and for the next hour the school-room is as quiet as a meeting-house.

Becky having in the same way, by a decent display of her authority, restored tranquillity, at length succeeded in preparing a meal such as had now been seen in the farmer's kitchen every Sunday for so long a time, that it was called par excellence the Sunday breakfast. It was made up, first of the poached eggs or omelet just mentioned; secondly, of a huge loaf of brown bread fresh from the oven; thirdly, of a capacious dish of pork and beans; fourthly—and in this consisted the crowning glory of the occasion—of a deep earthen pot containing a truly delicious compound of apples and pie-crust, and rejoicing in the classic name of pandowdy.

Truly might Philip say to himself, "I shall get something better to eat here than at home!" Never had such a breakfast graced—no! dishonored—the grimly virtuous table of Aunt Rebecca. The omelette would have been, in her eyes, a deadly sin; and as for the pandowdy, she could not have regarded it with greater horror if it had been filled with the forbidden fruit. But Philip's scruples, if any remained, all vanished into thin air before this savory repast. He swallowed several slices of the brown bread, skirmished boldly with the pork and beans, and made fearful inroads into the bowels of the pandowdy. Self-denial might be, and undoubtedly was, a very good thing in its way; but he rather thought he should prefer to practice it when he had nothing but hash for dinner; or, at any rate, he would only deny himself a little. On the whole, he would go without omelette.

"But you don't like omelet," whispered both stomach and conscience, at one and the same moment; and conscience added, "so there will be no self-denial in that."

"I don't care! I do love omelet; besides, if I don't, it's none of your business; so let me alone! I won't deny myself to-day a bit, there now!" and having thus got the better of his enemy, Philip finished his breakfast with another plateful of pandowdy and then hastened to join his companions.

Though the day was bright, the ground was too wet to promise much pleasure in going to meeting; so it was decided to stay at home. The squire put a small triangular bit of looking glass on one of the windows, preparatory to the dread operation of shaving. Mrs. Moody and her eldest daughter assisted Becky in clearing away the breakfast things, and then went bustling about the house, in search of something to do; but apparently not finding it, they soon came back again, and sitting down on opposite sides of the fire, commenced yawning after a most fearful fashion. The squire, having cut himself two or three times while shaving, and on each occasion muttered something that sounded very much like an oath, at length finished his task, and went out to the barn, as he said, to stretch his legs a little, and get a mouthful of fresh air. All seemed to feel the want of their usual occupations: Mrs. Moody said what

a fine day it would be for washing, to which Miss Martha assented, and added in a kind of aggrieved tone, that just as like as not it would rain to-morrow.

In the mean time, the children had not been idle. Philip had at first taken his seat demurely by the window, and now waited, with his Sunday face, to see what course things were likely to take. He was not a little delighted to find that the family were not going to meeting, and presently discovering the wide difference that existed between Squire Moody's and Aunt Rebecca's mode of spending the day, he, after a brief parley with conscience, determined to govern himself accordingly. "It's only once," he said to himself, "and I can make it all up next Sunday; besides, how they would all laugh to see me sitting down myself, and reading the Bible all day!" This settled the question; for there was nothing Philip feared so much as ridicule, which is much oftener the test of courage than of truth.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO OUR DISTINGUISHED FELLOW-CITIZEN, T. JEFFERSON TOTLING, ESQ., AND CERTAIN OTHER IMPORTANT CHARACTERS.

MONDAY morning, no one thought of grumbling because the sun rose so early, or complained of any difficulty in the discharge of his duty. An indescribable air of life and activity was diffused over the whole household: it was the result of that superior energy that in New England and all other countries where Sunday is strictly observed, distinguishes Monday and the first days of the week above their younger and weaker brethren. The squire was in high good humor: he lavished upon Mary all the terms of endearment he could muster, said it was too bad that Aunt Rebecca had insisted so positively upon her returning at the end of the week, and finally declared she shouldn't go, anyhow, till she was sent for.

In accordance with this determination, Mary and Philip, instead of going home on the day fixed by Aunt Rebecca, remained very contentedly at the farm. They even hoped that she might forget all about it, or at any rate would not think it worth while to come after them. But they did that worthy lady great injustice in supposing, in the first place, that she ever forgot any thing in which her authority was concerned; and secondly, that she ever suffered that authority to be evaded. She had calculated to a minute the time of their return; and when several hours had passed and still they did not make their appearance, she could no longer conceal her indignation. She did not, indeed, express it in words; but she belonged to that fortunate and highly-favored class who are able without speaking to impregnate the whole atmosphere about them with their ill-humor. It was as impossible to be near her, and not feel

her anger, as it is to go near a blazing fire and not feel the heat. But when evening came, and still no children, her pent-up wrath found vent in words.

"So," she said, in a manner that Queen Bess might have envied, "things have come to a pretty pass! I remember when children were expected to show some little regard to the commands of their parents or guardians, but that was a long time ago; nobody thinks of such a thing now-a-days. I suppose they thought they could stay there as long as they pleased, though I told them expressly to be sure and come home to-day. Aunt Rebecca's nobody! They can do just what they please with Aunt Rebecca, good easy soul!" and as if delighted with the novel view of her character thus presented, the amiable spinster went on a while longer in the same strain; then suddenly changing her tone, "But they'll find out their mistake fast enough, I warrant them; and Squire Moody, too, for I've no doubt he's at the bottom of it. But I'll show them all I'm not to be trifled with in that way. When I say they shall come home, come they shall, and that's all about it." Accordingly, early the next morning, when the farmer and his family had hardly got through breakfast, the door suddenly opened, and in marched Aunt Rebecca, with a countenance calculated to strike terror into the stoutest heart. Indeed, it seemed at first as if, like Medusa's head of old, a single glance were sufficient to convert the beholder into stone, so magical was the effect produced upon all assembled in the farmer's kitchen. The squire himself was engaged in putting on his boots, and indeed was in the very midst of that perplexing operation—

> "Upon one foot he had one boot,
> And the other in his hand, sir;"

and thus he stood, staring with a ludicrous mixture of fear and defiance at his formidable enemy. A little on one side stood Mrs. Moody, with a towel in one hand, and a cup she was wiping in the other; while Philip and Mary were partially concealed behind her ample person. This was the very moment to take their picture. Aunt Rebecca had advanced a single step into the room, and then stood still as if to enjoy the sensation she had pro-

duced; while without moving her head, she turned her cold, gray eye slowly and murderously from one to another.

Squire Moody was the first to recover from the pitiable state of confusion into which they had all been thrown by this unexpected apparition. Though taken at such cruel disadvantage, he yet showed himself worthy of the great reputation he had acquired in former encounters, and like a bold and skillful general advanced at once to the attack, in order to give the remainder of his forces time to recover from their alarm. "Ah! good morning, Miss Rebecca," he cried, advancing towards her with as much dignity as the inequality of his legs would allow, and still swinging the boot in his left hand, "this is an unexpected pleasure really; am sorry you did'nt come a few minutes earlier; we've just finished breakfast, and should have been glad of your company." "That's a horrible lie," he said to himself; "but no matter, she wont believe it, so it's all the same."

Mrs. Moody now came to the aid of her husband, and politely requested Aunt Rebecca to take off her things and spend the morning, now she had walked so far. To all these advances the only reply was a formal bow, and "I can't stop," as Aunt Rebecca sternly took a seat at some distance from the fire. There was something positively awful in this unconquerable reserve. Mrs. Moody fidgeted and looked at her husband, who had at last got on both his boots, and seemed at the same time to have put on a double portion of confidence. He stamped his foot once or twice on the floor, like an old crusader settling himself into his armor before a battle; and at the same time there was a peculiar expression about his mouth as if he had just crushed a mouse or some venomous reptile in his boot. Aunt Rebecca saw the look, and could not help wincing a little in spite of all her courage. She said nothing, however; and the squire in answer to the mute appeal of his wife, signed to her to hold her peace; then, taking a seat by the fire, he sat looking into the blaze as if totally unconscious of the presence of any other person. This continued several minutes, during which the silence became so intense that, like the Egyptian darkness, it might be felt. Aunt Rebecca at length finding herself defeated with her own weapons, was compelled to change her tactics. Turning her head slowly till her gaze rested full upon Mary and Philip, she said in a

low but fearfully distinct tone, "Get your things this minute!"

"Poh! they shan't do any such thing," cried the squire; "I've promised to take 'em round to the mill this afternoon, and they'll be dreadfully disappointed not to go. I can stop and leave 'em at your house on the way home."

"But I—choose—Squire Moody—they—should—go—home—now!!"

"It's no use I tell you! I've promised to take 'em round to the mill, and I don't mean to break my word for man, woman, or child. Really, Miss Rebecca, I wonder that a woman of your moral and religious character should advance such an idea!"

For a moment Aunt Rebecca was completely at a loss. She had expected to meet with entreaty and expostulation, and for these she was prepared; but the audacity of the farmer was so astounding, so utterly unforeseen, so incredible almost, that she could not at once contrive an answer. But all this advantage was well nigh lost to the squire by the unfortunate and ill-timed interference of his wife, who, with a misapprehension of Aunt Rebecca's character that was wholly inexcusable, sought to move her with honied words of flattering entreaty. The result was much the same as when an undisciplined horde is sent against a force of well-trained soldiers; the rabble rout is not only put to sudden and ignominious flight, but often involves the rest of the army in inextricable confusion. So Aunt Rebecca repelled with scornful ease the misjudged attack of Mrs. Moody, and even wrested much of his hard-won advantage from the hands of her husband. He saw the imminent danger of defeat; and, resolved to risk all on one desperate effort, he exclaimed, as he rose and pushed his chair back from the fire, and looked Aunt Rebecca full in the face; "It's no sort o' use dillydallying and shillyshallying at this rate; I have promised to take those children over to the mill, and there's an end on't. When I've been there, I'll bring 'em round to your house, but they shan't stir a step till then if the whole village should be after 'em; and Susan, let's have as good a dinner as you can scare up, and perhaps, after I'm gone, you can persuade Miss Rebecca to stay and help eat it." Then turning again to Aunt Re-

becca, who he saw was bent on some sudden and decided course of action, he half whispered, "How glad you must have been the other night, to find Mary didn't steal those plums after all! You know I told you at the time I didn't believe it; and I should ha' said a good deal more, but then thinks I to myself, Miss Rebecca is an amazingly quick-sighted and gumptious sort of a woman, and I hardly ever knew her to be mistaken in my life; so I spose she must be right now. There wasn't another person in the village that I shouldn't ha' flared right out at, if he'd said such a thing. Well, well! it's odd enough to think that I should be right, and you should be wrong, after all!"

The effect of this speech upon Aunt Rebecca was the same as that of an ashen twig upon a rattlesnake. At first she proudly raised her crest, and glared defiance at the enemy; but the next moment, as if subdued by some supernatural power, against which she felt it in vain to contend, she wilted and drooped, and at length sullenly retired from the field. She steadily refused all invitations to stay to dinner, and took her departure, solemnly assuring the squire that if the children were not at home that afternoon, they should never set foot in his house again.

She had no sooner left the room, than Squire Moody, looking round with the air of a man relieved from some deadly peril, first drew a long breath, and then with a short but hearty laugh, exclaimed, "Well, I was too much for her that time; but really, things did look dreadful ticklish at first. I was afraid at one time that I should have to give up, and I believe now 'twas nothing in the world that saved us but just those plums. She's a hard one, and no mistake!"

"She's a dreadful temper, to be sure," cried Mrs. Moody, "but then she makes capital pies, and is the best hand at a quilting I know of; only she *will* do her work rather too nice. But I'm glad she didn't stay to dinner though, for all that!"

In the afternoon a large heavy wagon filled with corn, and drawn by two horses, was brought up to the door. A short board was laid across the top, the farmer sat on one end, with Philip on the other, and Mary in the middle. The whole family assembled to see them set off. Mrs.

Moody had taken care to fill their pockets; and she now, as the last thing, put into the hands of each a famous great turnover, telling them to be sure and not taste them till to-morrow; and then with many good-byes on both sides, the little party set off.

After leaving his load at the mill, the squire drove directly to Mrs. Grant's, where the children unwillingly alighted, and bidding him as smiling a good-bye as was attainable under the circumstances, stood sadly watching him till he was entirely out of sight. They rather wondered that he had not stopped and spoken to Aunt Rebecca; and to tell the truth, this was his first intention, but on second thoughts he concluded that he should certainly quarrel with her in his present state of mind, and though he had no objections on his own account, he refrained for the sake of the children, who he knew would have to bear the consequences. He left them, therefore, at the door, feeling somewhat as he would have done if he had known that they were about to share the fate of Little Red Riding Hood.

The horses soon discovered by the nervous twitchings of the reins, that their master was in ill humor, and pricking up their ears set forward at full speed. The squire had almost reached the end of the street when he met Dr. Edgerly, walking along as usual, with his eyes on the ground, and apparently lost in thought.

"Halloo doctor" he shouted, "is that you? come, jump in and ride home with me. My old woman will be glad enough to see you; she's been at me every day to get you to come and finish that story. I've just been to mill," he added, as the doctor quietly took his seat beside him, "and then I had to carry home those two children, just to please that old tombstone, Aunt Rebecca."

And then the indignant squire began to tell the whole story, launching out into the most violent invectives against that good lady, and bespattering her with such unsavory epithets as would naturally suggest themselves on this occasion. He was in the midst of his philippic, when the wagon stopped before the door; but he still continued it all the way into the house, and never paused till it was time to sit down to supper. After supper was over, and they had conversed awhile on indifferent topics, Mrs. Moody

being now seated with a basket of apples, which she was engaged in paring, by her side, and, as she said, all ready to listen, the doctor prepared to resume his story, but had hardly commenced when he was interrupted by the arrival of a second visitor.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Moody, "it's that tiresome Colonel Totling, I declare! and he'll be sure to stay forever. Was there ever any thing so provoking? I wish he was in the bottom of the Red Sea!" then, as the colonel entered, she cleared her face of its frowns, and protesting that she was glad to see him, made him sit down by her side, where he established himself with all the ease of an old acquaintance.

Now, we confess we are as much annoyed at this untoward interruption as Mrs. Moody herself, and would cheerfully lend a hand for the sake of introducing the unwelcome intruder to the society of Pharaoh and his army, only the colonel is a person of so much consequence that we should a little rather not offend him if we can help it.

Allow me, then, with that formality and respect that are required when two such distinguished characters are brought together, to introduce the reader to Thomas Jefferson Totling, Esq., J. P., T. M. P., C. S. M.; that is, Justice of the peace, Postmaster for Totemwell, and Colonel in the State Militia. That's not half his titles either, no! nor a quarter; in fact, I believe I could go on in the same way through the whole alphabet; but *ex pede Herculem*.

And now, lest any of my readers should fall into the mischievous error of supposing that this awful and portentous dignitary was some tall and stately personage, whose very looks were enough to strike terror into the hearts of his enemies, I would hasten to relieve their apprehensions by the assurance that this was far from being the case. Colonel Totling was of barely medium height, and in no wise remarkable for personal strength or beauty. Indeed, he was wont to compare himself, in this particular, to Wellington, Buonaparte, and other famous commanders, who it is well known have often been of very slight proportions, modestly leaving his hearers to draw the conclusion that he was like them in other and more essential qualities. Nature, however, with kindly reference to that exalted sphere he was

destined to occupy as a public speaker, had greatly increased his allowance of neck; though I am well aware that very different explanations of this phenomenon had been hazarded by the wits of the vilage. One suggested that the colonel had, at some time or other, been subjected to a certain disagreeable operation, not to be mentioned to ears polite, by which, though he had luckily escaped any more serious derangement, his cervical vertebræ had been thus unduly elongated. Another gave it as his opinion that Colonel Totling, when a boy, had "seen London" so often that two inches had thereby been added to his stature; and this conjecture was marvelously confirmed by the extraordinary size of his ears, which could hardly be accounted for in any other way. As some of my readers may never have heard of the very simple and expeditious manner of seeing London here referred to, a brief explanation would perhaps be acceptable.

It is a well-known fact in natural history that young children, boys especially, are possessed with a prodigious bump of curiosity, which is forever urging them to undertake all sorts of desperate and hairbrained adventures. All your great travelers, astronomers, clamdiggers and philosophers generally have this faculty developed to a remarkable degree, but, as I have said, little boys more than any. And here lies the point—here is the most wonderful proof of nature's skill in adaptation, in fitting things to each other. Little boys were undoubtedly made to have this curiosity; big boys were made to gratify it. Thus, little Billy Green has no sooner made his first appearance on the village playground, having never before wandered farther than the length of his mother's apron-string, than great John Stout politely accosts him, and, after a few moments' trifling conversation, inquires with an obliging air if he wouldn't like to see London.

"See London! oh yes, I guess I should!" cries Billy; whereupon the ready Stout, that experienced cicerone, taking him, not very gently, by both ears, raises him some two feet or more above the ground, at the same time bidding him look very sharp towards the east; and after holding him awhile in this novel and agreeable attitude, again places him on his feet, his curiosity entirely gratified, and his desire of seeing foreign cities in general, and London in

particular, amazingly quieted by this experiment. This miracle can only be compared to that related of an eastern magician, who requested the sultan, his master, to plunge his head once into a tub of water, and in that brief space of time caused him to undergo twenty years of foreign adventure.

At the top of this neck there had sprouted out a small quantity of hair and features, or what had to do duty as such; though, with any other soul than Colonel Totling's looking out of them, they would have seemed but a sorry substitute. But his lofty and magnanimous spirit triumphed over all the slights that nature had put upon him. I have said that he was neither tall nor handsome, but I shall have to take it back; I am convinced, contrary to the evidence of my own senses, that he was handsome as an Adonis, and tall as one of the sons of the giants. This, at any rate, is what Totemwell thought of her favorite hero; and in the same way have I heard a London cockney admiringly expatiating on the tall figure and grand proportions of the little shrunken anatomy in which the ice-and-fiery soul of the Iron Duke was compelled to sojourn while here on earth.

With all these claims upon our admiration, it might fairly be presumed that the noble colonel would have imitated in his walk the prancing gait of some spirited and mettlesome charger at a Fourth of July celebration, rearing and curveting, and flinging out this way and that, to the huge delight of all the village urchins, who are wont to assemble on such occasions to fire crackers, drink sour lemonade, and eat pea-nuts, round-cakes, and molasses candy, in such quantities as only a patriotic stomach could possibly away with. But do not, I pray you, his modesty such injustice. Colonel Totling's step was as soft and self-contained as that of a cat. He never lifted up his foot without first knowing where he should put it down. He never made a misstep—never put his foot into a puddle in his life—but once—and then he spattered himself so badly that it was a lesson ever after. It was a pleasure to see him walking along the street, bowing courteously to every man, woman, and child he met, or else, when the fit was on him, pass abstractedly by without a sign. Finally, the colonel's voice was low and exquisitely modulated: he was not argumenta-

tive, but oracular; and for the rest, he must speak for himself.

"Rat, tat, tat, again! Who can that be, I wonder?" cries the farmer.

"Bless me!" returned his wife, "don't you know that rap? I should be sure 'twas Squire Buckle's if I heard it in Africa;—ah, good evening, Squire; I was just saying I knew it was you: good evening, Miss Buckle, and Laviny too, and Margaret—how do you all do? Here, let me take your things; and do you sit right down by the fire. You've brought your work, I hope? Isn't this most delightful weather? And how's Tommy? his teeth trouble him yet? How well you're looking, Margaret! and you, too, Laviny! It's time you two should be looking out for husbands—don't you say so, Miss Buckle? Well, well, I could give a pretty good guess, too, who they'll be; but 'tisn't fair to tell tales out of school—is it, Laviny?"

Squire Buckle would have been a fine-looking man if it had not been for a certain air of negligence, that was not only diffused over his whole person, but seemed also interfused through his whole character. His hair, straight and black as an Indian's, was afflicted with sundry obstinate cowlicks, as if repelled by electricity; his manner was slouching and slovenly; and a knowing twinkle played continually about his spectacles and the right corner of his mouth, as if he had just attended the funeral of one capital jest, or were about to be present at the birth of its successor. He was certainly possessed of more than ordinary talents; but his easy, indolent temper, joined to an excessive fondness for games and other frivolous amusements, had given a flabbiness to his character that rendered it impossible for him ever to make his mark in the world. He spent most of his time in playing checkers in a little room back of the post-office, and in telling long stories about nothing, to a listening group of ostlers and stable boys, who rewarded him for his condescension by pretending to believe most devoutly in all he affirmed, and by laughing at him behind his back.

Mrs. Buckle was of an entirely different temper. Equally vain and ambitious, she had married him simply on account of the social rank conferred by his profession; and her vexation was unbounded when she found that the weakness of

his disposition was an invincible obstacle in the way of his success.

Finding it impossible, however, to bring about the desired reformation, she at length gave up in despair; and henceforth overlooking, or, as polite writers say, ignoring, the existence of her husband, she centered all her vanity in the person of her daughter Lavinia. Her ambition, which had been so cruelly beheaded in her own perverse fortune, now sprouted out afresh; and she determined to retrieve her error, as far as possible, by obtaining for this young lady what is commonly called a splendid match.

Miss Lavinia had accordingly received the most expensive education; but, unfortunately, her capacity being too limited for its accommodation, all her acquirements only served to illustrate her folly. "Much learning," says some distinguished writer (Solomon, I believe), "is not seemly to a fool." And the reason is, he knows not what to do with it. It's a delicate instrument, of which he understands neither the touch nor the stops. It is Paganini's fiddle in the hands of a savage—Goliah's spear in the hands of a dwarf—an elephant riding on an ass: to use Squire Moody's more homely illustration, "teaching Miss Leviny Latin and Greek was like trying to pour a quart of molasses into a pint bottle; you might pour till you run it over, but you only made a nastier pickle."

Miss Lavinia's forehead, which was low and narrow, and projecting at the top, seemed made of a piece of soap; her figure was tall, and slightly old-maidish; but she dressed with a great deal of taste; her complexion was good; her manner had the appearance of animation; she had no lack of assurance; and the tap of her foot, a favorite gesture with her, seemed to add a certain force to her assertions.

But all this while Miss Margaret Bennett has been waiting for an introduction. Mrs. Moody, as we have seen, welcomed all her guests with equal cordiality; but her husband received Miss Margaret with such particular heartiness as showed that she stood high in his good graces. Now, as the squire was a pretty good judge of character, we may safely take it for granted that he was right in this instance, and that Margaret was really, what he often called her, "none of your 'skrinkem-skrankems,' but a downright sen-

sible girl, that knew just what she was about, and would make a good wife for anybody, he didn't care who 'twas—whether it was a farmer, or only a lawyer or doctor." She was certainly a very pretty girl, with brown hair, a smooth oval forehead, and large gray eyes. Her eyebrows might seem a trifle too heavy and prominent for a woman, and the same defect was also discernible in her nose, which was rather too thick for a perfect beauty. She was herself sensible of this blemish, and had often attempted to alleviate it by pinching this apprehensive feature, but her laudable efforts seemed hitherto to have met with very slight success. Indeed, the ill-natured used to assert that this treatment had had precisely the opposite effect, and had rather increased the evil it was intended to diminish; and the principles of homœopathy would perhaps favor that conclusion.

Miss Lavinia's great object in life was to secure a husband; and so, for that matter, was Margaret's; but they went to work in very different ways; or rather, while Margaret could hardly be said to work at all, Miss Lavinia left no stone unturned beneath which she thought it possible a husband might be lurking. Her position in society, her good looks, and, above all, her great accomplishments, gave her, so she thought, a right to look very high on the scale matrimonial; and nothing save an educated man would possibly serve her turn. As very few of that kind ever made their appearance in Totemwell, she had at various times made daring incursions into the neighboring towns; and having taken up her quarters, which she did without scruple as being in an enemy's country, with some of her chance acquaintance, she proceeded at once to reconnoitre the surrounding country; and, if she encountered in her march any unlucky doctor, lawyer, or more especially a minister, she instantly assailed him with the utmost resolution. But, as it was necessary to the success of her plans to take her enemies alive, and as they, on the other hand, chose to die rather than surrender, she had not yet brought home a single captive, and was accordingly meditating a journey to Boston to visit a young lady she had accidentally met one day in a stage coach; when an unexpected event at once caused an entire change in her plan of operations, and threw her, as well as her mother, into a state of the most eager

excitement. This event was no less than the arrival in the village of a young gentleman of good family, who had already commenced a course of study for the ministry, but intended, before completing it, to devote a few years to the business of instruction. His services had been secured by the trustees of the Totemwell Academy; and his first appearance at church, on the Sunday after his arrival, had produced a prodigious flutter among a certain part of the congregation. Miss Lavinia, in particular, having regarded him attentively out of one corner of her eye, and discovered that he was not more than five years younger than herself, at once decided that he was a very eligible match; and she determined to lay her train forthwith.

So have I seen a watchful spider, reduced to the very point of starvation, and all ready to sally forth from his web in search of prey, when, suddenly, a plump and juicy blue-bottle, buzzing carelessly through the room, is in a moment entangled in his meshes, where his piteous cries for help make music sweet as dinner-bell to his captor's ears. So flew Miss Lavinia upon the unhappy pedagogue; and round about his heart she wound the silken, invisible cords which were to bind him to her forever, and which he was never to feel till they were too strong to be broken.

To change the figure for one more worthy of the subject, Miss Lavinia having discovered the importance of the fortress and the weakness of the garrison, at once assaulted it with all the force she could muster. She had hopes at first of carrying it by a coup-de-main, but this proving unsuccessful, she was compelled to resort to the slower but more certain process of a siege; when, having taken up her position, she pushed forward her approaches in the most regular and scientific manner. She became a constant attendant at all the evening meetings, whenever she supposed the young minister would be present; and in this, her example was followed by so many of her condition, that Aunt Rebecca began to talk about a revival; she contrived to meet him at her father's house, and at everybody's else; she met him in the street; she met him at the post-office; she met him going to school, and coming from school; she talked, when he was listening, at what she considered the proper medium between an old woman and a school-girl;

she liked all the books that he liked; and in fact, she presently found out that their taste agreed in every thing, and that hence there was the most perfect congeniality between them. Having thus reached a proper distance, she mounted her first battery, and discharged into the heart of the citadel a very bomb of a pin-cushion, having these cabalistic words printed upon it in glittering rows of pins, *Auxiliam ab alto;* which would have doubtless produced a terrible scattering, if the Latin, which was probably intended to act as a fuse, had not been a little out of order. She followed this up with a tremendous fire of book-marks, watch-guards, and other female trumpery; while her mother, equally busy, though in another quarter, threw in now and then a thirty-two-pounder in the shape of a plum-cake or a jar of preserves; till at length the poor man, being thus assailed on every side, and almost deafened by the clatter, seemed about to surrender at discretion. But while his attention was thus distracted by these uninterrupted assaults, a second enemy attacked him in an opposite direction; and having, no doubt, assistance from traitors within, speedily made herself mistress of his affections; whereupon, Miss Lavinia broke up the siege, and retired in the utmost confusion.

As this digression has led us much farther than we had any idea of, we will defer the conversation that followed the arrival of Squire Buckle, to another chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

DR. EDGERLY TALKS WISELY WITH MISS LAVINIA.

Dr. Edgerly from his snug corner had watched the entrance of the new comers with cold indifference; but, seeing Miss Margaret, his countenance brightened, and hastily rising, he seemed about to offer her his own seat. But if this were the case, he was disappointed by his older, but more active rival, Squire Moody, who intercepted her half way, and forced her to sit down by his side, at the same time exclaiming, "One at a time is fair play, doctor! I know you and Miss Lavinia are too good friends to be parted."

"Friends are they!" cried Squire Buckle; "since when, I wonder? I'd as soon expect to hear that you had made friends with Aunt Rebecca."

"Oh! ho!" laughed the farmer, "Aunt Rebecca isn't the worst woman in the world, not by no means. She and I have a falling out now and then, to be sure; but we're none the worse friends for that, I'll be bound. What do you say, Miss Lavinia? don't you like the doctor there all the better after having a little bit of a spat or something of the sort? Come! own up now, like a good girl!"

But Miss Lavinia did not seem disposed to be a good girl at all, and she answered, "Why really, Squire Moody! as I'm not in the habit of having spats, as you call it, with the— with anyone, I don't see why you should ask *me* such a question!"

"Oh no! I forgot, you're one o' the amiable sort, that never quarrels with anybody; but here's Margaret, she's another crack up sort of a body; she knows what's what, I dare say, as well as another, and 'ould like nothing better than to get into a downright up and down quarrel with somebody or other. Come, what say? suppose you begin with the colonel? I'll stand by, and see there's fair play on both sides."

"No! thank you, sir!" cried Margaret, "I love to quarrel well enough, when I'm by myself, but I don't choose to quarrel to amuse other people."

"So! Miss Slyboots! you do all your quarreling by yourself! do you? well, that's a very safe rule to go upon, but I'd like to know how you go about it."

"Oh! its the easiest thing in the world, for one that has as many faults as I have."

"To be sure!" cried Dr. Edgerly, "I make a point of quarreling with myself regularly every morning, so as not to quarrel with other people. I take it generally before breakfast, and it works admirably, I assure you. It puts me in good humor all the rest of the day, and I can tell at once when I happen to miss it."

"Well now!" said Squire Buckle, chuckling, "that's a kind o' bitters I shouldn't care about taking any too often: seems to me, I should get so riled up, I couldn't speak a pleasant word again for a fortnight."

"Me too!" cried Mrs. Moody, "I'm sure I always know as quick as can be, when any one gets out the wrong side o' the bed in the morning."

"Tut! tut!" cried her husband, "don't go to telling tales out o' school!"

"Yes! but that's a different thing," returned the doctor; "in that case one has the disease naturally; but the way I mean, he takes it by inoculation."

"There's something in that, to be sure," said Squire Buckle; "but there's our friend the deacon, his wife, guess, had it naturally, and the very hardest sort; wonder she lived through it!"

"Live through it!" cried the farmer, "she'd live through any thing."

"Through a millstone!" suggested Dr. Edgerly.

"Or a knot hole!" added Squire Buckle, with his wry-faced chuckle.

"Now! aint you ashamed of yourselves?" cried Mrs. Buckle, "to talk so about the poor woman. To be sure, she came of an awful low family, and is'nt over and above genteel herself; but she can't help that, you know. I think we ought to try and encourage her as much as we can, and let her see we aint above calling on her once in a while."

"H—m!" cried Squire Buckle, "I tried to encourage her once in that way; but I shall want some encouragement myself, before I try it again, I'm thinking; Foh! I'd as lief toast my toes in the devil's kitchen as sit half an hour in the same room with Ma'am Redwood. No! no! you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear!"

"Nor a barrel o' maple molasses out of a jug of vinegar!" cried Squire Moody; "but she's completely spoiled the deacon. I can remember when Marc' Redwood was a very different sort of a chap from what he is now; great pity his first wife hadn't lived!"

"Why! had he been married before?" said Dr. Edgerly.

"I guess he had," replied Mrs. Moody; "her name was Carry Lambert, and she was as pretty a little creature as you'd wish to see on a summer's day. I can remember just how she looked the day she was buried, all in her bridal dress, and a rose in her hair, and a smile on her lips; I remember the squire said, he'd no doubt her soul came all the way back from heaven to bring it, for he was sure he'd never seen such here."

"And who did he marry then?"

"Well! she left one child, this Peter, that's how he come to be so good looking; and so, after a while, I spose the deacon felt kind o' lonely and as if he wanted somebody to take care of him; and so he went and married this Catherine Crampton: he found her somewhere down among the "White Oakers," though what he did it for I guess nobody can tell, for he might have had his pick all round the lot; and he's been a different man ever since."

"'Twas he that first took care of Mary Wallace; wasn't it?"

"Yes! that was two years and a half ago; he'd been married to this woman about five years when he brought Mary home, but he didn't keep her a great while."

"How could he ever give her up."

"That's more than I can account for, I'd be glad enough to take her any day, and so would the squire, though we've so many of our own; but do you spose, doctor, she'll ever find her father or other relations?"

"No doubt of it, not in the least! she'll find them some

time or other; but it's astonishing how she reminds me of my Fanny; but then every beautiful woman I see does that, I believe."

"Totemwell's a very stupid place; don't you think so?" said Mrs. Buckle, aside to Colonel Totling, "there are so few genteel people; and hardly any good society!"

"Why! yes ma'am; it's not equal to some of our larger cities in that respect, but yet I think we have a pretty fair proportion of refinement and intelligence. I have sometimes thought myself of removing to a wider field of action, and in fact my friends have urged me so strongly to do so, that I have had some difficulty to resist their importunity; but I can't make up my mind to leave Totemwell. In fact, I am not by any means sure it would be right for me to do it. I have lived here so long, and my interests and reputation are so identified with the place, that it would be almost like parting soul and body."

"Yes!" said Mrs. Buckle, "we ought perhaps to remain here for the good of others; and, so far as I'm concerned, I don't much mind it, but I *would* like to have Lavinia in a more come-genial sphere."

"And there are some of my friends would feel very badly about it."

"Here she's only wasting her sweetness on the desert air!"

"The opportunities of being useful here are so very small."

"But, after all, perhaps it's better for her health."

"Still my friends think I am not entirely useless."

"I sometimes think she's running all to mind."

"If a man has talent, it must show itself wherever he is."

"But in a few years her constitution may be more matured."

"And if circumstances prevent his being as widely known as he deserves—'my mind to me a kingdom is,' as Shakspeare says."

"And then, if I can do any thing with that husband of mine, I mean to take her to Boston."

"I am content to fill the humble sphere in which Providence has placed me."

"But there! he is the strangest man!"

"If I ventured into public life, it would be entirely from a sense of duty."

"I declare! he puts me out of all patience sometimes."

"If I had consulted my own happiness, I should never have accepted a single nomination, but my friends gave me no peace till I had consented."

"A man of his talents, if he had any spirit, would no more stay in this musty, fusty, little place than he'd—"

But here, while Mrs. Buckle was hunting for a simile, the colonel took the victory quite out of her hands. Each had been trying to get the better of the other; and, as the lady had the loudest voice, she would undoubtedly have succeeded, but this unlucky stumble changed the whole course of events. Mrs. Buckle made one or two desperate attempts to renew the struggle, but the clear, full stream of the colonel's oratory, flowing in its smooth, deep monotone, swept away all opposition, and, instead of talking, which she liked, she was compelled to listen, which she detested. She bore her discomfiture with a very ill grace; and certain weak and ill-defined schemes of vengeance, that bore about the same relation to thoughts as a tadpole does to a frog, began to squirm and wriggle through her mind.

"Do you know," said the colonel, after a becoming introduction, "I came near once being obliged to go to Washington? It was a short time after I had left the legislature; my friends were so well satisfied with my conduct that they urged, in fact they absolutely insisted, upon my nomination. It was very hard to refuse, but I did it on principle. I said to them: Gentlemen, I am always ready to serve my country to the extent of my humble abilities, but I feel it my duty, gentlemen, to decline the honor you have conferred upon me. You have been kind enough to express your unanimous conviction of my fitness for the station, and perhaps you are right, it does not become me to say whether you are or not; but this I do say, gentlemen, no one can ever accuse Jefferson Totling of inconsistency, or of acting contrary to his humble notions of right and wrong. It was a great disappointment to my friends, and, I believe, to the party generally, not only here, but at the South; but I have the satisfaction of knowing that I never deserted my principles."

"Fi! fe! fo! fum!" cried Squire Moody, "what's all this talk about principles? Don't you know, as well as I do, that you'd never been elected if you'd been nominated a thousand times over? And didn't you know it all along? Why, St. Paul himself couldn't have been elected from that district; that is, if he had voted the Democratic ticket, which he never would have thought of doing though, and I ask his pardon."

"Ah! colonel!" cried Mrs. Buckle, taking advantage of the momentary confusion into which her adversary was thrown by this attack, "how you do remind me of your father, to be sure! You know, colonel, I can remember the time when you first came to Totemwell with your old daddy, as you used to call him. Many a time, when I was a little girl, that was before you can remember, he used to come to our house; and we almost always bought something or other, some needles, or thread, or tape, or something o' the sort, whether we wanted it or not, just for the sake of old Job Totling, you know. And I remember just how the old man used to look. He would come into the kitchen ever so softly, and lay his pack down on the table without saying a word. Then he would straighten himself up, just as you do sometimes, colonel. I remember last muster when you got up to make a speech, I sat next to old Mrs. Gummidge; she's a decentish sort of a body, though she's not very genteel; but I thought then 'twouldn't do to be too particular, and I couldn't help crying out, 'Well! if there isn't old Job Totling again, I do declare.' And Mrs. Gummidge, she laughed till I thought she'd a fallen off the seat, and says she, 'so 'tis, as true as I live; it's the most wonderfiest' (she don't talk very good grammar) 'resemblance I ever see. The colonel is a little younger and a little taller, may be, and out-an'-out smarter drest, but it's old Job Totling after all.' And she told me a real good story about him, that I'll tell you sometime if you'll only remind me of it. But where was I? oh! I remember, the old man would straighten himself up just for a minute to git the crook out of his back, I suppose, and then make a very low bow; he was always just so perlite, and never a bit like other pedlers. 'Do you want to buy anything today of old Job; (sit still, colonel, I havn't got through;) any

pins, needles, thread, gloves, handkerchiefs, combs, scissors!' and so he'd go on and tell everything there was in his pack, and a pretty sight of 'em there was too, sometimes. And one day he took out a little china mug with my name printed on the outside, and 'there,' says he, 'I brought this 'ere all the way from Boston on purpose for Miss Nancy, and I had her name put on the outside, so't nobody might steal it.' Oh! how delighted I was! and mother bought ever so many things she didn't want, just to pay him for the mug, so't he made a pretty good spec.

"Well, the very next week father went over to Huston, and saw in a store just such a china mug, and a lot more besides. He took one up, and was a lookin' at it, and the storekeeper asked him if he hadn't a little girl at home that would like one of 'em, so father told him about Job's present. 'Oh, yes!' says the man, 'he bought it here, I guess; I sold him one a few days ago.' 'And what name was there on it,' says father; 'Nancy,' says he. 'Why,' says father, 'he said he bought it in Boston.' 'Oh!' says the man, laughing like, don't you know old Job Totling! why he's the slyest rogue, and tells more lies in a week than his pack would hold.' There now! don't go to be flustrated about it, for I've no doubt he stretched the story a little; and, besides, we don't expect much else from pedlers; but where was I? oh! when father came home and told us all about it, mother was mad enough, you may be sure, and she was going to throw the mug out of the window; but father, he was always just so cool and collected, (they always said I was like him in that,) he says, says he, 'Why! what's the use?-it's just as good, for all I see, as if 'twas all true as a book;' and so I've kept it ever since, though it's cracked right down the middle, and the handle's broke off; but then it's just as good for a keepsake or hairloom, as Lavinia calls it, and some day, when you're in at our house, I'll show it to you, if you'll only just remind me of it. Lavinia says as how she means to keep it in the family, and we've been thinking of having a glass case to put it in. And I should like to have you see it, so as you can tell me what you think about it. Mr. Buckle says it's no use, but then he never had a bit of family pride or ambition about him. Now you must be sure and remind me of it, for I'm the worst hand

in the world to think o' such things, and just as like as not should forget all about it. But I wonder what Dr. Edgerly and Lavinia find to talk about all this time. I'd rather not see him quite so attentive, for they say he's as poor as Job, and I've my doubts about his principles being just what they should be. I should really feel vexed if she was to go and throw herself away upon a poor doctor that nobody knows anything about, and a man of no family besides. What! you find the fire too hot? well now! it's just what I like!"

"What do you s'pose is the matter with the colonel?" she whispered to Mrs. Moody; "I just said something to him about Lavinia and Dr. Edgerly, and he looked as mad, and has gone and set down way over in that corner."

"Perhaps he's jealous o' the doctor; I shouldn't wonder a mite; men are such dreadful jealous creatures; how we do laugh at 'em to be sure!"

"Do you think so? really now! well, if 'twan't for old Job; but he's dead and buried; Mrs. Colonel Totling! the Honorable Mrs. Totling! h-m! h-m!"

"Don't you think, doctor," said Mrs. Moody, "that Totemwell is beginning to go ahead a little?"

"Yes," cried the doctor, "the signs of progress are certainly unmistakable and very encouraging. James Harris is going to raise his barn, and I understand that Simpson talks of building a new pigstye. And then the meeting-house doors are to be painted as soon as it comes warm weather, and there is some talk of having a new fence round the graveyard; though this is a secret, and I hope you won't mention it."

"I want to know. Well, I'm sure it needs it bad enough. But, doctor, I'm afraid you don't think as much of Totemwell as the rest of us."

"Why, Mrs. Moody, how can you say so, when you know I think it is the most beautiful place I ever was in?"

"Yes, but you don't think much of its ever becoming a large place. I've heard lots of folks say they didn't believe you thought it would ever be any larger than 'tis now."

"Oh yes, now I understand. Well, the fact is, I never *could* talk Totemwell."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I suppose I havn't been here long enough, or I don't think so much of a place being large as you do. I've seen enough of cities."

"Well, if you can't talk Totemwell, as you call it, you'd better not say anything; it vexes our folks dreadfully."

"I know it, but I can't help it. I must talk. I can't help seeing that Stratton Four Corners is a good deal bigger and smarter than Totemwell, and is always like to be. I can't help being glad of it, and I can't help saying so."

"Well, I'm sorry. I'm afraid you won't get along so well for it; our folks is so jealous, and I'm sure we've got twice as much water-power."

"Did you see that dreadful murder in the paper yesterday?" said Squire Buckle to Squire Moody after a long pause, during which the farmer began to nod.

"No! what was it?"

"A whole family killed and nobody knew anything about it for at least a week! You see!"

"Oh don't, for mercy's sake, go to telling that horrid story near me," cried Miss Lavinia, "it's too dreadful even to think of! Just think, Mrs. Moody, of their murdering three little children, the eldest not more than ten years old! It's positively awful! For my part, I don't know what the world is coming to!"

"I deny it!" cried Dr. Edgerly, straightening himself up with his hands grasping the bottom of the chair, then leaning slightly forward as if, as Squire Moody said, "he meant to jump, chair and all, down Miss Lavinia's throat," "I deny it! the world isn't coming to anything. Suppose there are a few murders now and then! what of it?"

"Why! I'm sure!" cried Miss Lavinia; "How you talk! Such things are very dreadful."

"That depends entirely on how you look at it; too much murder I know is bad, and so is too much salt or pepper; but a little may be very good for all that."

"I suppose you'd like to be murdered yourself," cried Miss Lavinia triumphantly.

"Why Miss Lavinia! you must excuse me, but really! I am surprised to hear a person of your intelligence argue a question like this on such narrow and unphilosophical grounds. I am not now speaking of murder in any such

vulgar particularity, but of murder in the abstract; and if you feel like discussing the point in a strictly logical, dialectic, and categorical manner, I think I can enunciate the syllogism with so much precision, that you, at least, may be able to perceive the truth. Come, what say you? 'tisn't often that I have the pleasure of sharing in such an intellectual feast, so I hope you'll not deny me."

Miss Lavinia saw that her mother and Mrs. Moody were both filled with admiration of the doctor's learning, and waiting to see how she would reply to it. She was, therefore, compelled to accept his challenge, though she did it very doubtfully, and like one walking over a bog. "Very well," she replied, "I am ready, though I don't believe you can ever prove that murder isn't dreadful."

"You'll see that it's the easiest thing in the world!" cried the doctor. "Now hear this! Whatever is predicated of a term distributed, whether affirmatively or negatively, may be predicated in like manner of everything contained under it. You'll allow that, I suppose?"

"Certainly!" replied Miss Lavinia.

"You allow that?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then! that is the first member of the proposition; now we come to the second, the *reductio ad absurdam*. First, if two terms agree with one and the same term, they agree with each other; second, no term must be distributed in the conclusion which was not distributed in one of the premises; and thirdly, from negative premises you can infer nothing: do you allow that?"

"I don't know about your thirdly," said Miss Lavinia, with a cold shudder.

"Don't know about my thirdly! why surely, Miss Lavinia, you must remember what Don Michealis Heliogabalus says on this very subject, in the hundred and sixty-ninth chapter of the seventeenth volume of his treatise, De Heretico Comburendo."

"No," said Miss Lavinia faintly, "I can't seem to remember exactly."

"Well! I don't pretend to quote his exact words, but he says, 'Non disputandum'—I'd better give the English, though, for the benefit of the other ladies—he says, 'It is

not safe to draw an inference from a negative proposition, as, for instance, the well-known example mentioned by Aristotle, when a certain man was charged with stealing a steamboat, two men testified to seeing him do it, and though ten more swore positively that they did not see him do it, yet the judge found him guilty.' You will allow, I think, that this is a case in point?"

"Yes! certainly! to be sure!" said Miss Lavinia.

"Very well! if you allow that, the question is settled. For murder is the term distributed, the time and the place both agree, and from these premises I don't see how you can resist the conclusion that murder may be a very good thing sometimes."

"It does seem so, to be sure!" said Miss Lavinia.

"To be sure it does, there's nothing like logical reasoning to correct erroneous impressions. Why, if there was nothing but virtue and honesty in the world, and all that, society would stagnate like a standing pool. Humph! how I hate your milk-and-water fellows that never can do a thing because it doesn't happen to be just right! Why, I tell you, if it hadn't been for a few such sturdy rascals as General Putnam, Andrew Jackson, and folks o' that kidney, it wouldn't have been half the world 'tis now. They're the very ones to go ahead, while your amiable man is all the time afraid he'll hurt somebody's feelings."

"I'm sure General Washington was a good man, and he—"

"All cant, I tell you, nothing but cant; he was no better a man than I am. Do you suppose a good man would have hung Major Andre? It's every bit as bad as the murder, as they call it, of the Duc d'Enghein."

"Why, Dr. Edgerly, you know Andre was a spy."

"Well, what of that? What difference does that make? What harm is there in being a spy? Answer me that; yes, Miss Lavinia, answer me that."

"What harm is there is being a spy? why, there's a good deal of harm; a spy is a—is a—"

"A spy is a spy, and that's all you can make of it; and I'd like to have you or any other man show what harm there is in that"

"But everybody says General Washington was a good man."

"Ah, yes, now you've come to it; everybody says so. Why, Miss Lavinia, I thought you had more independence; I thought you had a mind of your own."

"I like to agree with other folks sometimes."

"Agree with them, but don't quote them; and if you can differ with them, so much the better! It's so stupid to agree with people."

"Oh yes; and that's the reason you say Washington wasn't a good man, just for the sake of being odd and not like other people."

"To be sure, that's it exactly. I do so love to be independent and original;" and here the doctor threw himself back into his chair, and gazed complacently with half-shut eyes at his fair antagonist.

"Here, Dr. Edgerly, Dr. Edgerly," cried Squire Moody, "do have done plaguing Miss Lavinia, and give us the rest of your story; they all want to hear it."

"Oh! I don't know;" said the doctor, "I'm afraid you'll find it rather tiresome."

"Oh no, indeed!" cried Mrs. Moody, "now do, that's a dear, good man; here's Margaret been teasing me this hour to ask you."

"Why, Mrs. Moody, how can you say so, when you know—"

"Well, well," laughed the farmer, "it's all the same; you're willing to hear it, I dare say, to oblige the rest of us, aint you?"

Dr. Edgerly listened rather eagerly for the answer, but she only blushed the deeper and said, "Oh yes!"

"Well then," cried the farmer, goodnaturedly, "what's the use of making so much fuss about it? Come, doctor, I can answer for all the rest; but first we must have some apples to keep us busy, for we men folks are apt to be sleepy of an evening."

CHAPTER X.

DR. EDGERLY FINISHES HIS STORY.

"The death of Dr. Grandpre, who was the only friend I had in Paris, naturally affected me with the profoundest melancholy. Though there was so great a disparity in our ages, he had always treated me as his equal; and, as I have already mentioned, seemed to think that his thirty years of isolation from mankind had added nothing to his life, so that he was really not much older than myself. From this state of depression I was raised by receiving a letter from my Fanny. The means of communication were then neither so frequent nor so safe as they are now, and several months had passed since the receipt of her last letter. There was no news of any importance, but what I valued far more was the assurance it gave me of her unaltered and unalterable affection. This assurance did not rest on any particular expression, but in that indefinable spirit of tenderness, that does not seem so much to be the property of the words, as to be breathed into them from the very heart of the writer. This is peculiarly the gift of woman. It is one of her wonderful instincts which enables her to throw over all she does a charm such as the sky of Italy throws over the face of nature.

Though my Fanny said nothing of the kind, it was easy to see that she longed for my return. I was equally impatient to see her, and determined to make my stay in Paris as short as possible. As soon as my arrangements would permit, I bade adieu to that gay city, and arrived without any delay at Havre, where I easily secured a berth on a homeward bound merchantman. We had a prosperous run, and in three weeks arrived off the coast. I had gone to bed at an early hour, full of the most delightful anticipations. A slight shade of melancholy seemed to insinuate these too gaudy fancies more gently into my soul. I dream-

ed I was in heaven, and awaked to find myself in hell. A sudden bustle on deck aroused me. Feeling about me in the dark, I discovered that the ship was nearly on her beam ends, while the muffled confusion above was of the most appalling description. Going hastily on deck, I found the captain already there, and issuing his orders with promptness and decision. We had been going under easy sail, for he had thought it possible that we might fall in with the land before daybreak; and it was to this circumstance that we probably owed our deliverance. The violence of the squall had pressed down the ship till the bulwarks were fairly under water. The sail that was set had all been split into ribbons or blown bodily away .The mainsail had escaped from its lashings, and in its struggle to free itself from its bondage seemed to shake every timber in the ship. It reminded me, even in that moment of peril, of a wasp that had flown into the net of some unlucky spider and threatened by its vigorous efforts to demolish the whole fabric. There is no way to save the whole but to sacrifice a part. In the same way, the crew having exhausted themselves in useless efforts to confine the sail, the captain gave orders to cut it loose from its fastenings. Having been with great difficulty disentangled from the rigging it was instantly swallowed up in the darkness that fitted close to us on every side, and the ship, now relieved from the pressure, regained a more upright position.

Leaning over the stern, I surveyed the scene with an interest that entirely absorbed any selfish fears for my own safety. Now and then a wave taller and swifter than its fellows, broad-chested and strong-limbed, would come sweeping after us, with a force and impetuosity it seemed impossible to escape. But just as it was about to make its final spring, the noble ship would shoot ahead, while the baffled billow, disappointed in its aim, would sink sullenly beneath the surface. But fresh enemies joined in the pursuit at every step, while the poor ship, as if wearied by her unnatural exertions showed evident signs of failing. She leaked badly, and did not rise above the waves so lightly as at first; and I could discover an evident anxiety in the faces of the captain and other officers. They were consulting together as to the expediency of cutting away the masts,

when a huge wave suddenly flung itself aboard over the quarter, and swept the deck as with a whirlwind. I felt myself dashed violently against some solid body, and the next moment was hurried overboard, still clinging to it for support. My first impression was that the ship had gone to pieces, and that I was grasping a fragment of the wreck; but the next moment I caught a glimpse of the hull in the gray of the morning, as it rose on the summit of a wave, and was then shut from my view. I did not doubt that the crew had been swept overboard at the same time with myself, and as soon as I could clear my throat from the salt water with which I was almost strangled, I shouted at the top of my voice in hopes of receiving an answering hail. But I heard nothing but the voice of the waves, that, in their angry contention, would have drowned the shout of armies rushing to battle, and I concluded that my companions had either been swept beyond the reach of my cries, or had perhaps sunk forever in the deep.

The object against which I had been dashed, and which was the means of saving my life, was a hencoop and part of the bulwarks to which it had been secured. Its buoyancy was sufficient to keep my head above water, and I had some faint hopes of holding on till picked up by some passing vessel. It was now morning, and the gale had considerably abated; but the sea still raged with tremendous fury—I should have been several times torn from my support, but I had strengthened my hold by winding my handkerchief about a bolt that projected from the wreck, and the thought of my Fanny made me strain every nerve.

All that day I was tossed up and down, and buffetted by the scornful waves; night came and went, and I still clung to my raft with all the energy of despair. It was fortunate for me that as my strength diminished, so did the raging of the sea; it had now become quite calm, a gentle breeze sprung up from the south, and the sun, rising and looking down on the world, discovered me floating, a mere speck, in the vastness of the ocean. I imagined he looked on me with a sort of wonder and compassion; his warm rays seemed to be the expression of these feelings, and I pleased myself in my desolate condition with the thought of sympathy between my wretched self and the glorious luminary. Afar

away in the horizon, at the other end of the golden path that led to my newfound friend and protector, I suddenly detected what hope whispered was a sail. It was a glimpse only, for the next moment, if there, it was lost in the dazzling brightness of the full-fledged sun. Still I kept my gaze fixed in that direction, and at last plainly saw it stealing, like the hour-hand of a clock, along the circumference of the vast dial-plate of which I was the center. Hour after hour I watched it with the most intense interest. It drew nearer and nearer, its gentle ripple seemed already to rock my frail support. I took my handkerchief from the bolt and waved it as high above the water as I could reach. The ship passed me at about the distance of a mile. She held steadily on her course, breaking, one after another, the slender cords of hope and trust I had fastened on her, as an elephant might break a silken thread.

In my despair I turned my eyes to the sun in a mute, almost unconscious, appeal for his assistance. The sky was smooched with clouds, and, through the open spaces between, the sun sent down long, sloping bars of light. As if in answer to my unuttered prayer, he hastened to one of these narrow loopholes and leveled at me one of his brightest rays. For a moment I swam in a sea of glory; the next all was clouded as before. But that moment was enough; some one on the vessel had seen an object floating at a distance, a glass was called for, and it was at once discovered to be a man. The ship changed her course; her head was towards me; in an hour I was on her deck, faint and weary with cold and hunger and my long struggle with the waves, but thankful for my great deliverance.

The ship was called the Hoogly, and was bound to Canton. Her captain treated me with the utmost courtesy, and received me at once into his cabin. He regretted that he could not land me in some of our own ports, but promised, if we should meet any homeward bound vessel, to set me on board. For a while I rested in this pleasing illusion, but when several weeks wore away, and still I was carried farther and farther from home, no words can describe my anxiety. I had written to my Fanny announcing my speedy return, and knew she was every day expecting me. If, as I supposed, the ship in which I embarked had perished

with all on board, it would be long before she could learn the truth; but if, on the other hand, any had been saved, she would certainly believe that I was lost. I could not help wishing that the first might prove true. Yet even this hope gave me but very slight relief. I pictured her full of eager anticipation at the thought of our meeting, then anxious at my long delay, holding on to her faith and courage long after all others had given me up, and at last yielding only to what seemed the dreadful certainty.

I fell at length into a violent fever from, which I did not recover till the ship arrived at Canton. Though all here was new and strange to me, I lost not a moment in securing a passage home. It was some time before I succeeded, but at length the kindness of some countrymen to whom Captain Andrews had mentioned my case, procured me the situation of surgeon's mate on board an English frigate then lying in the river, and soon to sail for England. I cannot describe to you the tedium of this voyage. I arrived safely in England, and at once took passage in a brig bound for New York, where I arrived just two years and six months after leaving home.

Without a moment's delay I hurried on to Drayton. The third day I recognized the well-known landscape. The month was June, the air was warm, all nature was in vigorous life. The old stone fences, with the tangled raspberry bushes, seemed to smile at me as we passed. There were the woods in which we had often walked; under that tree I know there was pennyroyal; there we had gathered foxberries and the tender leaves, and there I had stooped to tie her shoe. I fell back in my seat, and laughed in my heart at the fullness of my satisfaction. Then, by a quick transition, the same stream ran bitter. I looked out impatiently at the horses; they hardly moved.

The stage was winding slowly down the long hill that overlooked the village, when we met a funeral procession toiling painfully up it. Hurra! hurra! I shouted to myself, folks die that stay at home; but I! I am alive! Hurra! hurra! I pity them, but why need they die? We turned aside to let them pass; the old man on the hearse, I knew him well; I tried to look grave, but I saluted him with a smile; he smiled faintly back, but the smile froze on

his face as he saw who I was. He stopped his horse mechanically, and looked at me; I shall never forget that look. I turned to the first carriage in the procession; on the front seat sat Dr. Fielding, but he looked so old that I thought I must have been gone twenty years. Jumping from my seat I ran and looked into the carriage. There was a strange gentleman on the front seat beside Dr. Fielding; on the back seat, Mrs. Fielding and another lady. She wore a cap, her skin was wrinkled and old, she was short and stout, there was a big bag in her lap; no, that was not, could not be my Fanny. Where is she? I whispered, shaking the doctor's knee. He pointed forward with his trembliug finger, but said not a word. I signed to the driver to move on, and took my place at the end of the procession. They asked me to ride, but I would not mix my grief with theirs. What right had they to mourn? Was I not enough? Could a few drops swell the ocean? A dreadful calm now filled my soul; it was the first violence of the tornado pressing down the mad waves. The procession entered the churchyard and stopped before a new-made grave; it was really true then; the coffin was placed by its side; I signed to have it opened; I knelt down and gazed, but she never looked at me. I spoke to her, I besought her by all our love to answer me but a single word. I was almost angry that she would not, it seemed so easy, and I could not believe that she was dead.

I could have stayed there forever, but they took her from me, and buried her in the cold ground.

The whole world seemed to me buried in her grave. The universe was annihilated. There was no sun, no heaven, no God. I looked in every direction, and found only emptiness; I was cut adrift at once from all the interests of humanity. Oh! why had I not perished in that fatal storm.

They told me how she died. When the ship in which I had first embarked, arrived, and she heard the tidings of my death, instead of the joyful meeting she had anticipated, the shock was too great and sudden for her gentle spirit. She gradually sunk under it, and the very day that I landed in New York, she set foot on the shores of heaven. I could not remain in the village, for I missed her everywhere. A morbid fancy drove me in search of her, and my

life was a perpetual disappointment. If I sat in the deserted parlor, a voice seemed to whisper, she is in the garden among the flowers. When I could not find her in the garden, I thought certainly she must be in the wood, and I hurried thither in pursuit, again to return to the house and repeat my fruitless round.

I determined to go to New York. I would exchange the solitude of my heart for the solitude of a great city. On my way I stopped to visit my father, and my brothers and sisters. The little school-house, where I had studied and played so long before, seemed smaller and blacker than ever. It was a holiday, and the house was deserted, but I easily undid the withes that supplied the place of a lock, and entered. An air of indescribable melancholy seemed to fill the place—the master's desk, with its accustomed litter, no longer possessed its former dignity; and I smiled to myself at thought of the awe it had once inspired. I took my seat in my old corner, and, forgetting its narrow limits, strove to recall some of the scenes and incidents of the past. My name still stood by Daniel Webster's on the front of the low desk, and many others had been added, as yet, however, unknown to fame. I remembered the very day when I placed it there, and the fond hopes that then filled my boyish fancy. Suppose, I thought, it had all come true, what difference would it make now? If *she* had been alive, then, indeed! and my heart swelled as I thought how she would have enjoyed my triumph; but now, my only ambition is to die.

As I sat lost in these melancholy fancies, a little mouse, stepping noiselessly forth from a hole beneath the desk, first glanced timidly round, then, as if assured by the silence, began nibbling at some crumbs that lay scattered on the floor. It is strange how the merest trifle will sometimes arouse the mind from the lowest depths of despondency. I found myself unaccountably interested in the movements of this little animal. As I watched the quick glances of its eye, as it moved its head from side to side, its sudden start at every fancied danger, I fell involuntarily into the following train of reflection. See here, I said to myself, an apt emblem of human life. We live encompassed by dangers, the sword of Damocles is suspended over our heads, an unseen foe attends all our steps, the most fortunate have most cause for alarm.

But thou art raised above all these unworthy fears. A dreadful fate, like the curse of Kehama, has rendered thee invulnerable to all other assaults. Fire cannot burn thee, water cannot drown thee, danger shall know thee and pass by thee. What, though thy heart is consumed by an inward fire, though the breeze may not cool thy burning brow, nor the cold water quench thy thirst; this fearful curse gives also a fearful power.

As I uttered those words I roused myself from my languid position, and the mouse, alarmed, ran back into its hole.

I left the school-house, and hurried on to my father's; whence, after a short visit, I hastened to New York. I established myself in an obscure quarter of that city, and devoted my whole time to the study and practice of my profession. I became a constant attendant at the hospitals, and exposed myself to infection with an impunity that laughed at danger. But by degrees the violence of my sorrow abated, and with it the fierce energy it had aroused. My soul, freed from the domineering influence of this single passion, began once more to be conscious of gentler emotions. Pride, ambition, love and hope, all forms of human sympathy to which I had long been a stranger, awoke one by one in my breast. I noticed this change with uneasiness, and at first strove against its advances. I had become accustomed to my sorrow, and proud of the power it conferred. I was unwilling to subject myself again to the weaknesses of humanity; the alternations of hope and fear, of joy and despondency that tyrannize over the fortunate and happy. It seemed to me that I was giving up that strict unity, that singleness of will, in which I had so long rested; I should no longer be a free agent, but, instead, the slave of every impulse, of every appeal to my passions or sympathies, the property of others rather than my own.

I found it in vain to resist, and passively gave myself up to my old masters. But love could never live again in a heart where it had so rudely suffered, and I sought to fill the void of which I was at length conscious by the aid of friendship. I attached myself to a young man I had met in the hospitals, and to whom I had been able to render an important service. I attended him through a severe illness; and, when his money was expended, I supplied his wants from

my own scanty resources. I was obliged to live on the plainest fare in order to provide him with those comforts his situation demanded. He occupied my bed, while I slept on the floor by his side. All this time, I had not the slightest affection towards this person for whom I made so many sacrifices. Nor did my apparent benevolence proceed from any feeling of sympathy or compassion. The prospect of his recovery gave me no pleasure, as his death would have given me no pain. But this state of torpidity was not long to continue. One morning, as I sat regarding the countenance of the sufferer, I detected, as I thought, a resemblance to her I had lost. The longer I looked, the stronger grew this impression. He was an eminently handsome man, and this circumstance, together with the delicate appearance produced by severe sickness, may help to account for my illusion. From that moment my feelings changed, or rather I then first began to feel. I was no longer indifferent as to the effect of my treatment; I watched every symptom, noticed every change, and when, at length, he began to amend, I was myself surprised at my emotion. Every day, as his strength increased, so did my affection, nor was he at all backward to return this attachment. He thanked me a thousand times for what I had done, and declared he should never forget my kindness so long as he lived.

For two years nothing occurred to disturb our harmony; the very differences in our characters only seemed to unite us more closely. His temper was open and conciliatory—mine was more reserved. He made friends wherever he went, and without effort; while I had hardly an acquaintance besides him. He began to acquire quite an extensive reputation, while, outside of the hospital, I was almost unknown. Yet our friendship was so free from envy that I regarded his triumphs with as much satisfaction as if they had been my own, and listened without weariness or impatience to his account of the patients he had secured and the treatment he had adopted. He seldom ventured to treat an important case without first asking my advice, and I felt proud of this proof of his confidence in my ability. He had now taken lodgings in a neighborhood somewhat superior to that in which I made his acquaintance, and urged me so constantly to do the same, that after a while I con-

sented. He also urged me to go more into society, and offered to introduce me among his own acquaintance.

"I declare," said he, on one of these occasions, "you smell so of the hospital that one would think you had slept in a charnel-house. That coat, I've no doubt, is impregnated with all the diseases that have been known in New York these three years, and would not be in the least out of character if worn by old king Death himself. Do, my dear fellow, throw it into the fire, turn your back on the hospital, and don't open a book again for a twelvemonth. You have learning enough for half a dozen doctors, but it is rusty for want of use. Many a man, with not half your ability, would by this time have acquired a handsome fortune. There's that fellow Jenkins! I would hardly trust him to doctor my horse! and yet he has as good a practice as any in the city. Perhaps you are simple enough to suppose that skill has something to do with it; but I assure you he is the laughing-stock of all his acquaintance, for his ignorance and stupidity. To give him his due, however, he doesn't pretend to any more learning than he really possesses, except when he's visiting a patient; but then he assumes such an air of authority that you might suppose a whole college of physicians to be represented in his single person. It's that air of his that does the business, and I've often said it's worth full three thousand a year. Now all your learning will hardly keep you from starving.

"I know what you are going to say," he continued, as he saw me making up my mouth for an answer; "all this is highly unjust, and plainly mischievous in its tendency. But we have nothing to do with that; we must take men as we find them; if they choose to buy lead at the price of gold, I make no objection; though it must be allowed, that this is an unfortunate state of things to those who have no lead to dispose of."

Though I was not vain enough to believe all Douglas had said of my ability, nor ill-natured enough to receive his other assertions without allowance, I was so far affected by this and similar conversations, that I did make an effort to throw off a little of my studious reserve and enter more into general society. But this only made my natural unfitness for such scenes more apparent; and after one or two

trials, I gave up the attempt, and returned to the society of my books and that humble class to which my practice had been confined. About this time the tidings of my father's sudden illness and death recalled me to my native village. When I returned, after an absence of several weeks, I found that Douglas had again changed his lodgings, and now resided in the most fashionable quarter of the city. It was also rumored that he was about to be married to a daughter of one of our most wealthy merchants. Filled with impatience, and never for an instant doubting that he would be equally eager to see me, I hastened to the house where I had been directed. A servant opened the door, and ushered me into a splendid parlor. While I was admiring the height of the ceiling and the richness of the furniture, and contrasting it with the wretched apartment where I had first met Mr. Douglas, he entered with a ready-made smile that, for want of a better word, I must call professional. It was another form of that air which he had commended so highly in Dr. Jenkins. He no sooner saw who it was, however, than his countenance fell, and he could not conceal his vexation. Advancing hastily, he expressed his regret that I had called at such an unlucky hour, as he was just then obliged to visit one of his patients, who was at the point of death. He should be very happy, however, to see me when he was at leisure, and hoped I would call as often as convenient, though he supposed that, as I resided at such a distance, he could not often expect the pleasure of my society. So saying, he hurried away, leaving me standing in the middle of the floor, and staring stupidly at the door where he had vanished. I fear I must have presented a very ridiculous appearance, for at length the same servant who had admitted me, after looking into the parlor three or four times, asked me if I was going to stay there all day, and added that Dr. Douglas would not be home for several hours.

I left the house, but in such disorder that I took the wrong way, and did not discover my mistake till I had walked more than a mile. All the way I was tormenting myself to account for Douglas' behavior. At first, I was inclined to be angry, and resolved I would never go near his house again, but presently changed my mind, and concluded that what he had said was really true, and that it

was only the hurry of business that prevented his being as glad to see me as I had expected. My anger was now changed to pity, and I resolved to go and see him the very next day. Poor fellow! I said to myself, now is the very time he most needs your friendship and sympathy. He has just entered upon an adventure of no little hazard and uncertainty, and probably feels a great deal of anxiety about the result.

Full of this thought, I went home to my own humble lodgings, the sight of which, as I then felt, was so far from exciting any feeling of envy at thought of the splendor I had just quitted, that I rather congratulated myself on being free from those cares and perplexities which, as I imagined were the lot of my more fortunate friend. Early the next morning I was again at his house, but he was not at home. This was the case for several days in succession, and I know not how long I might have continued to call in the vain hope of meeting him; but one day, happening to look back as I turned the corner of the street, I saw him just leaving his house, having probably too much impatience to wait till I was out of sight. There was now no longer any room for self-deception; it was plain that my friend had not escaped the usual effect of prosperity, and was anxious to forget all that could remind him of his former condition. Yet I will do him the justice to say that he would have raised me with him if he could; but finding that impossible, he wisely concluded to drop me altogether. There are perhaps few natures sufficiently noble to continue to love a friend under such adverse circumstances. I did not blame Dr. Douglas because he was no better than others; his conduct inflicted a deeper wound; it did more than all his arguments had done to shake my faith in the honesty and sincerity of human nature. Passing from one extreme to another, I now regarded every one with suspicion. If he could use me thus, what must I expect from those on whom I had no stronger claim than the ties of a common humanity. I determined to leave the city where I believed our natural selfishness to be fostered and nourished by the fierceness of competition, the tyranny of social distinction and all those refinements of civilization that tend to rob a man of his

individual conscience, and substitute in its stead the conscience of a class, a trade, or a corporation.

Mere accident directed my choice to this village, and here I have had ample opportunity for reflection. Bitter as have been my disappointments, I do not regret my experience. That experience has not been in vain. I am proud and happy to think I have loved. I would not sacrifice this blissful recollection for all those dreams of ambition that so mocked my boyish fancy. The man who has never loved has never really lived. He is acquainted with only the least and lowest part of his nature. He is like the owner of a splendid palace, who inhabits the meanest apartments, while others of unknown beauty and magnificence are ready to fly open at his word.

I remember in my youth having read a story of an enchanted castle, in which there was a golden door that its occupants were strictly warned never to open. The young man who was permitted to dwell in the castle, having disregarded this warning, discovered halls and gardens of such ravishing beauty that all he had ever seen before seemed poor and contemptible in comparison. But, unlike him, we cannot be deprived of the treasures thus disclosed to our view. The beloved object may be taken from us, but the joy and glory of having loved is ours forever. The higher the object of our affections, the greater is our reward; to love even a bird or a flower is no small gain, to love a virtuous woman is the height of earthly happiness; but to love God—this is not only in itself a shoreless, brimming sea of happiness, but shows the man to be possessed of the sublimest capacity.

The doctor told the foregoing story in the manner of one talking to himself, and with many sighs and ejaculations and other interruptions of a like nature with which we did not see fit to trouble the reader. He often paused like one traveling along a road he has not seen for many years, as if to recall more vividly the scenes and incidents suggested by the once familiar objects around him. He then, with a smile or a sigh, would resume his discourse; but one might have noticed that his smiles were something shaded with melancholy, and his sighs seemed to utter about as much joy as sorrow. His whole manner was so

different from the careless, mocking tone of his conversation with Miss Lavinia, that it seemed almost impossible to suppose that he was the same person. This manner represented more truly his real character, or the character he had when by himself; the other was worn only in company, partly to hide his weariness, and partly to amuse himself by playing with the weaknesses of others.

When he had finished, the whole company were silent for several minutes. Miss Margaret occasionally looked at the speaker with an air of tender concern; once or twice she made mistakes in her sewing, and had it all to do over again; and when he came to tell of Fanny's death, she could not conceal her tears. The farmer complained that the fire smoked awfully, and began to poke it vigorously with the tongs, though Mrs. Moody declared she never saw it burn better in her life; Squire Buckle listened with great apparent interest to the whole story; and the colonel, after whispering and laughing a while with Miss Lavinia, leaned his head on his arm and fell fast asleep. After the doctor had finished, he waked up, declared he hadn't slept a minute, that the story was exceedingly interesting, and he would like to go to France himself.

"I came very near going several years ago," he added, quietly, "as Secretary of Legation. Several of my friends thought that my visit to Canada had especially fitted me for that office, through the intimate knowledge I had there acquired of the French character, and believed I might be of great service to the Minister, who was in fact rather inexperienced (though I trust this will go no farther, at least as coming from me), and needed some one on whom he could rely in difficult emergencies."

"And why didn't you go?" inquired Squire Buckle.

"Why, my friends recommended me to the Minister, and if it had rested with him, I should undoubtedly have been selected, but unfortunately the Secretary was already appointed." ("And so," said Squire Buckle, "*you* were disappointed.") "To make some amends for this failure," continued the Colonel, frowning, "my friends procured for me the office of Postmaster; and though I do not consider it a very responsible station, they urged it so strongly that I did not feel at liberty to decline."

"It's a thousand pities!" said Squire Buckle.

"Well," cried Squire Moody, "I'm satisfied with my own country, and I don't care who knows it; and if there's a prettier village than Totemwell, or a prettier piece o' ground than my ten acre lot, anywheres in France or England either, for that matter, I say, bring 'em on, that's all, and I'll own up beat. But till then I say, America against the world!"

"I presume you found the French a very gay people, did you not, doctor?" inquired Miss Lavinia, with a complacent tap of her foot.

"They have that reputation, I believe," said Dr. Edgerly.

"All along of their eating so many frogs!" cried Squire Buckle, "they're born, I take it, with a natural genius for dancing."

"Did you ever go to court?" asked Miss Lavinia, darting a disdainful glance at her father; though if she had known that Swift had made a similar observation, she might have shown a little more forbearance.

"Never," replied the doctor.

"And why not?"

"Why, there are several reasons; it's not the easiest matter in the world to get into the presence of royalty, and I had no one to introduce me; and, besides, I couldn't afford it."

"Couldn't afford it! Why, do they charge any thing for admission?"

"To be sure! just as much as at any other show. You don't suppose, I hope, that a real live king is to be seen for nothing, do you? Why, you have to pay a quarter just to see a lion and a few monkeys, and I'm sure a king costs a great deal more than a whole menagerie of the common sort o' wild animals."

"Yes, but really now, how much does it cost to see the king?"

"Let me see: it depends a good deal on what kind of a king it is; I suppose you might see the king of Dahomey for a dollar, but if you wanted to see the king of France or England, it would probably cost you at least fifty."

"Fifty dollars!" cried Squire Moody, in high disdain,

"I wouldn't give *that* to see the whole boodle of 'em, and all their aunts and cousins into the bargain; I'll warrant I've seen many a better man in my day!"

"Why, of course," said Miss Lavinia, "kings are no better than other people, but then——"

"No better," cried Squire Moody, "they're a plaguy sight worse, let me tell you. I wouldn't give a good, honest, hard-fisted farmer for a cart-load of 'em; I don't suppose they ever saw a potato in their lives till after it was cooked, and then they'd be just as likely to think it grew on a tree as any other way. No, don't tell me about your kings—they're just like a patch o' thistles. If I had my way about it, I'd mow 'em all down, root and branch, you you may depend on't."

"I suppose, doctor," cried Miss Lavinia, "you acquired a very correct knowledge of the French language, during your residence in Paris?"

"Enough to converse in it without much difficulty, but I suspect a Frenchman would detect me at once. Indeed, it is almost impossible for a foreigner ever to catch the accent."

"I didn't find much trouble," said Miss Lavinia; "but then my teacher always said I had a remarkably correct ear."

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Buckle, "you talking about speaking French? La doctor! I do so wish you could ha' heard her talk with some French people that come along here last winter; you remember 'em, don't you, Mrs. Moody?"

"Oh yes! all on one sled, with a feather bed and an old patchwork quilt; I remember, because it was just after Christmas; the squire killed a pig that very day, and I was packing some of it in snow, and the same week we got a letter from Boston to let us know that Robert had got another baby. How they did jabber, to be sure! I couldn't understand a word they said."

"Nor I either, but Lavinia jabbered away as fast as any of 'em; 'twas for all the world like so many monkeys; I declare, I thought I should ha' died a laughin'!"

"What did she say?"

"Well, she asked 'em if they talked French, an' they

said they did; and then she asked 'em something else, but they didn't seem to make out so well at, that, Lavinia said because they was low, ignorant people, and didn't talk so elegantly as she did; which, to be sure, is all natural enough, for you know they havn't had any such advantages. I'd no idea when Lavinia was a studyin' French that she'd ever have any use for it, and I used to think sometimes 'twas a waste o' money; but I declare, when I heard her talk, I wouldn't ha' begrudged it if it had been twice as much. Aint you a going to let Lucy and Susan study it?"

"What!" cried Squire Moody, "so as to ask a parcel o' French beggars, that happens to come along, whether they speak their own language? No, I guess I aint. For my part, I never could see the use of a man's having two languages any more'n two mouths; and there'd be some sense in that, too, if one could only eat twice as much for it."

Soon after this, the company took leave, Dr. Edgerly gallantly offering his arm to Margaret, while the colonel did the same to Miss Lavinia, and Mr. and Mrs. Buckle brought up the rear.

"Did you ever see such a stupid time in your life?" said Miss Lavinia.

"Sure enough," cried her mother, "but it was all owing to that tiresome Dr. Edgerly. I can't imagine how Squire Moody came to do such a thing."

"For my part," cried the colonel, "I think it was downright rude to the rest of the company; not one of us could say a word."

"That's a fact," cried Squire Buckle, chuckling and shrugging his shoulders, for it was so dark he knew the colonel couldn't see him; "I expected as much as could be, you'd ha' told us all about your going to Congress, or else about that speech you made down at the Legislature; but better luck next time!"

"You needn't hunch me so," cried his wife: "you've almost knocked the breath out of my body!"

"How do you like this Dr. Edgerly?" asked the colonel.

"I can't bear him," said Miss Lavinia.

"I'm sure he's a very pleasant, sensible fellow," said her father.

"I dare say he is, for those that like him; but for my part, I don't profess to understand Dr. Edgerly, and never did," replied Miss Lavinia.

"Very likely," said Squire Buckle; "but I expect he'll survive it."

It is now full time to return to our hero, whom we left standing, with Mary at his side, before Aunt Bethany's door, and looking soberly after the farmer and his wagon as they rattled furiously down the street. When he was fairly out of sight and hearing, they slowly turned and went into the house. The room presented such a contrast to the cheerful homeliness of the farmer's kitchen, that Philip felt a sensation of restraint, he hardly knew why, as he glanced at the bright painted floor with its little bit of carpet extending just three inches on each side of the hearth, and then at his muddy boots and dusty clothes. The fire seemed to reproach him with his want of neatness; the flames, which elsewhere are wont to disport themselves in all sorts of antic freaks and gambols, stole primly up the chimney as if the very salamanders had stood in awe of Aunt Rebecca. The line of beauty was nowhere to be seen, except at the corners of the table-cloth, which, in spite of all her efforts to the contrary, *would* hang in those graceful curves that nature taught them. Each corner was at exactly the same distance from the floor, the plates were arranged with geometrical precision, and the knives and forks, placed tangentwise, formed the rightest of all right angles.

"Oh dear!" said Mary, "how I wish I was back again at Mrs. Moody's!"

"So do I!" said Philip, "what a nice time we'd have had this evening, sitting up after supper and telling stories; and now we've got to go to bed so early, there's no time to do any thing at all."

But now they heard Aunt Rebecca's step, coming slowly up the cellar-stairs. Mary ran and opened the door; and the next moment that lady appeared, carrying in one hand a ball of butter, and in the other a pitcher of milk, while she hugged a loaf of bread under her arm. She had no little difficulty in retaining possession of so many articles at once,

so that she was obliged to lean a little to one side, and twist her mouth in a very peculiar fashion; yet even under these trying circumstances, she managed to walk with even more than her usual dignity. No one ever saw Aunt Rebecca "*en dishabille*," or in that state of mind so appropriately defined as the dumps. Whatever might be the inward struggle, like the Spartan boy with the fox beneath his cloak, or the commander of a starving garrison, she carefully concealed every appearance of distress, and still presented the same unyielding front. If Aunt Rebecca had been a hero at all, and had had a *valet-de-chambre*, she would undoubtedly have been as great a hero to him as to the rest of the world; if she had ever had her moments of weakness, her own heart would have been her only confident.

"Well, children! you've been up at the farm, having a fine time, I suppose, doing pretty much as you'd a mind, and falling into all sorts of bad habits (there's your boots now); but I'm glad you've enjoyed yourselves, and I shall expect you to try and give me as little trouble as possible, now you've got home, to make up for it."

That is to say, "You've been very bad and very happy, at Squire Moody's; now I expect you to be very good and very miserable."

I don't know whether this was what Aunt Rebecca meant, but this was how the children understood her; and they both cast their eyes on the floor, and stood looking as foolish and miserable already as one could desire, and wishing, verily, that they could shrink into a knothole, so that they could have it all to themselves.

Aunt Rebecca having given them this welcome, looked at Mary for several moments with a shame-faced sort of tenderness, as if she were about to indulge herself in the pleasure of a kiss; but, if this were so, she soon stifled that emotion, and began somewhat nervously to re-arrange the already thrice-arranged things upon the table, not because they were capable of improvement, but because it was so awkward standing there doing nothing.

"Now!" said she, "if sister Bethany would come, we would have supper; in the meantime, Philip, you can bring

in an armful of wood; but mind and not drop any or make a litter!"

Philip willingly obeyed; and on his return Aunt Rebecca took the wood, stick by stick, from his arms, and put a part of it carefully, even tenderly, on the fire. The rest she stood upon end in the corner of the chimney.

"See!" said Philip, "the wood is crying; and those sticks in the corner, how they crowd back to get away from the blaze!"

"Why, the fire doesn't hurt 'em any, does it?"

"Don't hurt 'em any! to be sure it does, just as much as it would you!"

"Who told you so?"

"Oh, I know so; if you don't believe it, you just get in there yourself; you'd jump back pretty quick, I guess."

"Oh! there's aunt Bethany!" cried Mary, joyfully, and forgetting her rising sympathy for Philip's imaginary martyrs; "aint you glad?"

"I guess I am, for now we shall have supper."

Mrs. Grant was very glad to see the children, and she did not think it necessary to conceal her satisfaction. She was not a strong-minded woman, but was, as far as possible, free from that burdensome reputation. One could form a very fair estimate of the character of the two sisters from what they said of each other in this very matter.

Aunt Rebecca would say, "Sister Bethany means well; she has the best intentions in the world; but then she has no knowledge of human nature. She is so deficient in dignity that she can never command respect. I have done all I could to make her sensible of her deficiency, and indeed I believe she is conscious of it herself; but it's of no use; she hasn't sufficient strength of mind to be any thing else. I'm afraid I've been too hard with her, for you know nothing tries my patience so much as this want of moral elevation."

On the other hand, Mrs. Grant would sometimes venture to say, "Of course sister Rebecca knows a good deal better than I do; but I can't help wishing she was a little more indulgent sometimes. The children mind me well enough, though I do frolic with 'em and give 'em a bit o' gingerbread every now and then; but then she says it is all owing to her being so strict that they mind at all, and if she treated

'em as I do, there'd be no living in the same house. And, to be sure, everybody knows that sister Rebecca is a very superior woman, and whatever she says must be right; but I'm sure it's a great deal better to get along kind o' easy like as far as one can."

To this temper on the part of Aunt Bethany, the children owed many a stolen indulgence; for as she stood in almost as much awe of her sister as they did, she seldom dared to bestow her favors openly. Once or twice she had been detected in the act by Aunt Rebecca, and on these occasions it would be hard to say whether she or the children seemed more guilty and embarrassed. But this evening she neglected her usual precaution, and lavished upon Mary every expression of fondness and delight, till Aunt Rebecca, curbing her impatience as well as she could, exclaimed, "Come, sister, do let the child alone, and come to supper; it will be cold as a stone, if you stand there much longer!"

Aunt Bethany seemed a little flustered by this abruptness, but every appearance of discomposure vanished at sight of the well-loaded table. "Come, children!" she imprudently exclaimed, "see what a nice supper Aunt Rebecca has got ready for you!"

Aunt Rebecca darted a withering glance at her sister; but it was unnoticed, and the infatuated Bethany went on. "Here's a nice plum cake she's baked on purpose for you, because she knew how much you both liked it."

"Sister Bethany! you are enough to try the patience of Job. Any one would suppose, to hear you talk, that we hadn't had any thing to eat for a week; just as if, too, there was nobody else in the house! I guess you love plum cake yourself, and how do you know I didn't bake it for you?"

"Why! you said—"

"No matter what I said; but if you don't want any of the cake, I won't cut it to-night, after all; there's plenty without it, and we shall want it some other time."

Poor Aunt Bethany! she was indeed sadly deficient in knowledge of human nature. There stood the cake in its youthful prime; it would never be so good again, nor would they ever want it so much; the plums were thrusting their shiny coats out of the rich, dark crust; even the knife had been brought, all ready to dissect it.

"Ah, ha!" laughed the cake out of its hundred gaping mouths, "you thought you were going to have a nice feast off me, didn't you? but you were nicely mistaken. You'll never eat me till I'm old, and tough, and mouldy, and fit for nothing else, ha! ha! How sober you all look! cheer up! here's bread and butter and apple sauce; come fall to! what, no appetite? will nothing but me serve your turn? It's no use. Aunt Rebecca's a trump, ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up!" cried Philip eyeing the cake very savagely; whereupon Aunt Rebecca frowned, Aunt Bethany stared, and Mary laughed outright.

The supper passed off heavily; but, by degrees, all somewhat recovered their cheerfulness, and Aunt Bethany forgot her vexation about the cake in listening to the children's eager account of their doings at Squire Moody's. Even Aunt Rebecca's heart relented a little when she came to restore her untasted cake to the cupboard; and to make amends, she suffered them to sit up a full hour after their usual bedtime. Then she feigned the utmost surprise at the lateness of the hour; though in fact there never was a time throughout the day when she could not have told what o'clock it was, almost to a minute; but she was fond of conferring her favors, as it were, by stratagem, partly from the reasons already explained, and partly because it seemed to imply a certain degree of subtlety and adroitness.

CHAPTER XII.

CONTAINING A PRODIGIOUSLY LEARNED AND ABSTRUSE DISCUSSION BETWEEN PHILIP AND MARY; AND SHOWING ALSO WHAT A FINE THING IT IS TO KNOW HOW TO REASON.

As the astronomer, after long peering at the moon "through his glazed optic tube," till sense is weary, at length turns away his eye and ponders and calculates on the discoveries he has made, and still the moon moves on; or as a traveler, after long journeying through a country whose pleasing variety keeps him constantly on the alert, comes to a wide stretch of barren moor, and shuts his eyes and dozes till he enters again a land of hills and orchards and gardens, and waving fields of grain,—so we having seen enough for once of the little world of Totemwell, will stop awhile and rest.

But still the little world of Totemwell moves on. Winter has come and gone. The year has burst into butterfly brightness—the trees have blossomed and set their fruit—'tis gay and gaudy midsummer, and the air is thick with the sweets of honeysuckle and clover and new-made hay.

There is the old-fashioned house, perhaps a little, but only a very little, more weather-beaten than before. On the green behind it, in his dwarfish arm-chair, sits a little boy, whom we have no difficulty in recognizing as our friend Philip. He is just within the shadow; the sun, two hours past the zenith, and peeping down over the eaves, draws a line of light diagonally across his foot. He is listening to the still buzzing of the flies, stiller than silence, and his thoughts or fancies rather keep time to their low-lulling monotone. He is still feeble, but he will be strong to-morrow: so he thinks, and that is enough. In at every sense, with nimble feet, run the airy messengers of delighted enjoyment. Who would not be a boy—forever? Cold and hard and incomplete are man's pleasures! but stop! here

comes Mary skipping and dancing down the narrow path: we will watch their meeting. She comes close up to him, and lays her hand on his shoulder; is he any happier than before? Not a whit; he rather wishes she hadn't come; she has disturbed his dreams. Oh! the little old bachelor!

"Philly dear!" Why a full-grown man needn't be ashamed to cry with joy at such words and tones; but Philip sees nothing to cry at, or laugh either; he only says, "Well!"

"Dear Philly!"

"Well, I say."

"Oh, you can't think how glad I am, you aint going to be sick any longer; aint you?"

"To be sure I am; how can I help being glad?"

"It must be so nice to be out doors again, and you've been so long in that ugly old chamber. I hardly ever dared to go in there, it looked so dark and gloomy. Do you know, one time the doctor said he was afraid you were going to die?"

"No; did he?"

"Yes; and if you had I was going to die too."

"I didn't die though, after all; I'd no thoughts of it."

"But you might have died, you know, if you hadn't got well."

"If! that's another thing; I knew I should get well."

"How?"

"Oh! I knew; I shan't die till I'm ever so old; not this fifty years."

"I wish I'd known it before, for I shouldn't felt half so bad."

"Well, after this, when I'm sick, you needn't think I'm going to die, for I aint."

"I hope I shan't die either, at least not till you do; should you feel very badly if I should die, Philly?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I can't tell till I've tried it; but I expect I should feel pretty bad."

"I shouldn't want you to feel very bad, but only a little, so I might know you loved me."

Oh, Philip! Philip! what!—cold yet, and insensible? how little you know the happiness you are thus rudely thrusting from you! No, I would not always be a boy.

"Well, but Phil."

"Well, but what?"

"Aunt Rebecca sent me out here to take care of you."

"Aunt Rebecca?"

"Yes."

"How funny!"

"Is it? What makes it funny?"

"That you should take care of me; but" (sinking his voice almost to a whisper) "I don't know exactly what to make of Aunt Rebecca."

"Don't you? and are you going to make any thing of her?"

"I mean, I don't know exactly what to think of her."

"She's very old."

"Oh, yes, ever so old!"

"Older than the meeting-house?"

"Yes, I guess she is."

"And she wears a black bombazine dress."

"Bombazine?"

"Yes, and a big comb."

"Well, I can see all that easy enough, but I'd like to know whether she cares any thing about us or not."

"About you and me?"

"Yes."

"I guess she does, she gave me a piece of gingerbread the other day, and once before she gave me a piece of silk to make my doll an apron."

"She never gave me any thing but medicine, and when I was sick she never seemed sorry but once."

"When was that?"

"One day, when I heard her coming I shut my eyes and made b'lieve asleep, and she came close up to the bed, and said, poor boy! and then—now don't you tell anybody, will you?"

"No."

"But promise me now truly, you'll never say a word about it."

"No, I never will, true as I live."

"And then—she kissed me."

"Oh, Phil! are you sure?"

"Yes."

"How do you know 'twasn't Aunt Bethany?"

"Don't you spose I can tell her kisses? this was different as can be."

"And what did you do?"

"I was going to give her a real nice hug, and kiss her too, but I was afraid she wouldn't like it; so I laid stock still, and bimeby she went away."

"Well, I don't believe she ever kissed anybody before, and I don't believe anybody ever kissed her either. I don't love her as well as Aunt Bethany; do you?"

"I don't know; I didn't use to, but she hadn't kissed me then."

"She never kissed me once."

"Well, that makes a difference; but I thought you were going to take care of me."

"Well, I do, don't I?"

"Not very well; see how you let the sun shine on me."

"But I can't help that, you know."

"You can tell it not to."

"But 'twon't mind me."

"It will, if you have faith; don't you remember how it minded Joshua?"

"But that was ever so long ago, and Joshua he—"

"Joshua, he what?"

"Why, he was a man you know; but, Phil! is that the Joshua Aunt Bethany talks about so often?"

"The one she calls her Joshua?"

"Yes."

"Oh, no, her Joshua only died twenty years ago."

"And did the other Joshua die before that?"

"Yes indeed, a thousand years."

"Oh my! what a long time! do you suppose I shall live as long as that?"

"Not if you don't take better care of me."

"Well, I'm going to begin now and take care of you all the time."

"Suppose I won't let you?"

"Oh, but you will, you know, because you're sick and can't take care of yourself."

"I don't know about that."

"Why, she said you couldn't."

"She doesn't know every thing."

"Doesn't she?"

"No, I guess she don't."

"What doesn't she know?"

"She don't know—she don't know how many hairs there are in Deacon Smiles' head."

"Well, do you?"

"Yes, I counted 'em last Sunday."

"Oh, Phil, in meeting! but how many did he have?"

"Thirteen and a half."

"Is that all, how funny! but how could he have half a hair?"

"The other half had been cut off, I spose."

"Well, there isn't any thing else she don't know, I guess."

"Yes, there is."

"What?"

"She don't know how many clover tops there are out in that field."

"Oh no, nobody knows that."

"Yes, they do."

"Who is it?"

"Oh, I know."

"Tell me, Phil, won't you?"

"God knows."

"Why, do you suppose he ever counted 'em?"

"Yes indeed, ever so many times."

"When?"

"Oh, the other day."

"Wednesday?"

"No, Tuesday."

"Hasn't he counted 'em since?"

"No."

"Then he doesn't know how many there are now."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I picked a lot of 'em yesterday."

"Hem! just as if he couldn't see you pick 'em!"

"Yes, but he couldn't tell how many I picked, I did it so quick."

"Well, you had better look out how you steal his clover tops, if you don't you'll catch it some o' these days."

"Why, they ain't his, they're Aunt Bethany's."

"Hush! hush! there's Aunt Rebecca; don't look."

"Why not?"

"She'll make us come in, if you see her."

"Where is she?"

"She's standing in the door, and beckoning."

"Well, if you see her it's just the same."

"But I don't see her."

"Oh, Phil! you said you did."

"But she don't know it."

"Don't she?"

"No, she thinks I'm looking at the old cow."

"Is she there now?"

"Yes—no—she's just gone in. Oh! isn't that first-rate?"

"But perhaps she wants us."

"Well, I can't help that."

"You can go in."

"Then suppose she didn't want us?

"But you said she beckoned for us to come in."

"No I didn't."

"What did you say?"

"I said she beckoned."

"Well, that's the same thing."

"No 'tisn't, not by a good deal; perhaps she was beckoning for us not to come in; we can't be sure you know, and I should hate to disobey her; but there she is again."

"Mary! Mary! you've been out there long enough; you can come in now!"

"There! I told you so!"

"And you're glad of it, I 'spose! Oh dear, it's too bad! I've hardly got out here, before I have to go in again."

"She'll let you come out again, I guess, to-morrow."

"I don't want to come out again to-morrow. I want to stay to-day. I never saw any thing like it! I hate Aunt Rebecca! There! she's just as ugly as she can be."

"Aunt Bethany!" cried Mary, as soon as they got into the house, "do you know every thing?"

"Why, what a little fool you are!" whispered Philip.

"Who, me, my dear? Why, no! I don't know nothing."

"Well, does Aunt Rebecca know every thing?"

"She knows a good deal, but I guess she don't know as much as Mr. Bennett."

"Well, does Mr. Bennett know every thing?"

"I expect he does, a'most every thing."

"What doesn't he know?"

"'What doesn't he know?' Let me see: he doesn't know how to knit, I guess."

"What! don't know how to do such an easy thing as that! Then I know something he doesn't. How funny, that such a little girl as me should know how to do more'n a great big man, as Mr. Bennett—and he wears spectacles, too!"

"Well, I never! How she does run on, to be sure!—to think she should go to think o' that!"

"Well, but Aunt Bethany!"

"Well, what is it, dear?"

"Do you suppose—do you 'spose God knows how to knit?"

"Why, deary me! who ever heard the like! Why, goodness sakes alive! I never saw such a child! It's really dreadful! You musn't talk so, my dear! it's very wicked—though, to be sure, I can hardly help laughing all the time."

"Why, sister Bethany!" cried Aunt Rebecca, who had overheard the whole conversation from an adjoining room, "do you really know what you're saying? I should hope not, I'm sure, for I was never so ashamed of you in my life. Pray! do you suppose that child has a soul?"

"Why, how you frighten me! I'm sure I hope so."

"'You're sure you hope so!' Why, you talk like a perfect heathen! And you've been letting her run on at such a rate, I could hardly believe my own senses: such shocking blasphemy! If that child's soul is lost, I'm afraid you'll have to answer for it."

"Why, what could I do? I'd no idea—"

"'What could you do?' Why, do any thing; put her in the closet. Here, Mary! come here this minute! There! stay there till I tell you to come out; and you can improve the time in meditation and prayer; though I'm afraid it'll be of no use. Well! this taking care of children involves a fearful amount of responsibility. And it all comes upon

me. Here, Philip, what are you about? Come away from that closet, directly!"

"I'm going to help Mary."

"'Help Mary!' What do you mean by that?"

"I'm going to help her pray and meditate."

Aunt Rebecca looked at him perfectly aghast, then at Aunt Bethany, then raising her eyes and hands to the ceiling for a moment, she dropped both with an expression of utter despair. She finished this pantomime by rushing suddenly upon our hero, and thrusting him into the cellar-way. "You'll have enough to do to pray for yourself," said she.

"Why, he'll catch his death a' cold!" timidly hinted Aunt Bethany.

"Better do that, than come to—to the gallows," cried Aunt Rebecca, walking violently back and forth like a caged lioness.

"You might send him up stairs."

"I might! I might! and I might! It's always the way, from morning till night! You never do any thing yourself, and if I do, you go to finding fault. But you shall have your own way. Here, Philip—Mary, come out; there, now, you can do what you please. I've nothing more to say or do in the matter."

"Why, sister Rebecca! I—"

"Now don't begin to 'why-sister' me, I beg of you! as if I'd said or done any thing so very dreadful. All is, if you're going to take charge of these children, I'm sure I haven't the least objection; only just say so, and then I shall know what to depend upon."

"Oh, dear me, no! I wouldn't for the world! I never took charge of any thing in my life, but once, and that was that quilting, when you was gone to Beverly. I really thought I should a' died. I hardly knew, when 'twas all over, which end I stood on. To be sure, that was a long while ago, and I'd hardly got over the shock of losing my poor, dear Joshua."

"Oh no! of course not! How should you? he'd only been dead ten years. But what's all that to do with the matter?"

"Sure enough, what has it? Oh, the quilting reminded me of it, I spose."

"And what reminded you of the quilting, pray? Or what has a quilting to do with taking care of children? Really! I do wish, if you attempt to reason at all, you would reason a little more to the point."

"Reason! why, dear sakes! I'd no thought o' reasoning! I never did such a thing in my born days! A nice piece o' work I should make! and with you, too! I remember what my poor, dear Joshua, said about that once. 'Don't you never,' said he, 'go to reason or argufy with Rebecca; 'cause why, if you do, you're sure to get the worst of it. I've seen,' says he, 'some pooty good argufiers in my time, and some that cut a pooty good swath that way; but blame it, if she wouldn't mow the heels off the best of 'em.'"

"I'm much obligated to him, I must confess, for speaking o' me in that vulgar sort o' way," cried Aunt Rebecca, in high disdain, yet secretly elated at such discriminating praise; "but do let him alone for the present, and come to the point; for I shall fly off the handle, if you don't proceed in a more straight-forward and logical method."

"Dear me! how—"

"Now, just listen to me a moment, while I state the question, and then you can give me your answer. These children are here in this house, are they not?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so."

"You needn't be so slow about it; anybody can see that."

"Well, they're in the house."

"And being in the house, they need some one to take care of them?"

"Yes."

"Of course they can't take care of themselves?"

"Of course not."

"It wouldn't be proper that John should take care of 'em?"

"John? oh no!"

"Nor Sally Lunn?"

"Sally Lunn?—well, Sally's a good girl, but she's enough else to tend to."

"There's nobody left, then, but you and me—is there?"

"No; I can't think of anybody else, without it is the cat."

"'The cat!' pshaw!" snarled Aunt Rebecca, showing her teeth, like her amiable prototype already referred to; then suddenly changing her intention and her tone, she determined to proceed with the same crushing logic in which she had commenced. "Oh, yes! I had forgot the cat; but she is hardly fit, especially as she is yet little more than a kitten, to have the care of children?"

"No; I should hardly think she was."

"Well, then, as I said before, there's nobody left but you and me; and now the question is, which it shall be. Will you take charge of the children? or shall I take charge of the children?"

"Well, to be sure! I never was in such a twitteration before, in all my born days! I thought I understood every word, but I don't exactly seem to get hold of it."

"H—m! I see! one might as well argue with a child. Well, then, to cut the matter short, will you take upon yourself the charge of these children?—the entire and sole responsibility of their moral and physical education?"

"Why, dear me! I guess I wont; I told you that, the very first thing; I wouldn't have such a 'sponsibility, for no sakes whatever."

"But somebody must do it; somebody must bear the responsibility. Perhaps you can suggest some plan."

"Oh dear, no, goodness knows! I never suggested a plan in my life; but there's one thing I don't seem to see exactly."

"Well, what is this one thing you don't see?"

"Why, what's the need of a plan at all? Why can't we do as we've been doing all along? and—"

"And what?"

"And let the 'sponsibility go. Seems to me, we've got along well enough, so far."

"Well!" cried Aunt Rebecca, throwing herself violently into a chair, "if you aint enough to try the patience of Job! That's all the thanks one gets for doing any thing for other people. Here have I been slaving away, year after year, and tormenting myself to death every day of my life, thinking what was best to be done, just to save you all care and trouble; and now all you can say is, 'we've got along well enough, so far'! I dare say you think so. It's mighty easy

to sit still, doing nothing, and see other folks work for you! Much you care about it! A fine state o' things 'twould a' been, truly, if everybody had taken it as easy as you have!"

"Why! I'd no idee!"

"No, you've never any idea; I don't believe you ever thought about any thing five minutes together in your life—if you had, you wouldn't think it such an easy matter. I do believe you 're every bit as bad as Squire Moody; though he says right out it's no more trouble taking care o' children than training a pumpkin vine; and I'm sure you talk as if you thought so too."

"Oh dear no! I wouldn't think so for the world! children are always running about; and, to be sure, so's a pumpkin vine, for that matter; but then one can make it run pretty much as one's a mind, by taking a little trouble. Oh no! I'm sure children are more 'sponsibler than a pumpkin vine, a good deal."

"Well, I'm glad you allow so much! and now, as you're convinced that there *is* a responsibility, I suppose you will acknowledge that somebody must assume it."

"Why yes, I spose so."

"Well then, the question now is, who it shall be."

"Yes."

"Who do you propose?"

"Me! I don't propose nothing, nor nobody! I couldn't do such a thing to save my life."

"But who do you think would be the fittest person?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, without it's Mr. Bennett, or Deacon Redwood."

"Why, I positively believe you're crazy! what in the world has Mr. Bennett or Deacon Redwood to do with the management of our private affairs?"

"Why, I thought perhaps they might be willing to assume the 'sponsibility."

"And who wants 'em to assume it? If you and I 'aint able to manage two such chits as them, I think it's high time for my part we should go to school, to learn."

"Certain, we can manage them easy enough; but I thought the question was, who should assume the 'sponsibility."

"And what is the difference, pray?"

"Oh, nothing as I know of, only I thought, as you seemed so particlar about it, there must be a good deal."

"Well, I'll tell you what 'tis—are you going to take charge of those children or not?"

"I'd rather not, that is if you ain't very set about it."

"Then I am, and that's all about it; so Mary, do you sit down in that chair till I tell you to get up; and Philip, you can go up stairs and lie down till it's time for supper."

The children obeyed, and Aunt Rebecca having thus with infinite difficulty reëstablished her authority and escaped the dangers that menaced her, determined never again to expose it to similar hazards. Henceforth she took it for granted on all occasions, and was careful never to weaken her power by attempting to prove it.

CHAPTER XII.

SWEARING ÆSTHETICALLY CONSIDERED, BEING THE ONLY MORAL ESSAY IN THE BOOK, AND WHICH THE READER CAN SKIP IF HE SO CHOOSES.

HAVING now brought my hero in safety to his ninth year, I would take this opportunity of congratulating those of my readers who have accompanied me thus far, on the peace and harmony in which we have made this part of our journey. Nor can I forbear congratulating myself also, on the good fortune or dexterity that has enabled me to steer clear of the numerous dangers that threatened us; and that my natural partiality has not induced me, in a single instance, to lose sight of that integrity which should be the distinguishing virtue of a historian. But my satisfaction for what is past is marred by my solicitude for the future. This harmony is liable at any moment to be disturbed. I cannot promise a long continuance of this uninterrupted serenity. The point which we are about to weather is famous for storms. The innocence of ignorance will soon be lost; and a long interval must elapse before the innocence of knowledge can supply its place. During this stormy interregnum, those dark ages that stretch from childhood to manhood, while the soul is an anarchy of contending passions, and the experiment of self-government is still a doubtful problem; while the boy now, for the first time strangely conscious of his own identity, begins to look within him and about him, and to wonder, like the first man in Paradise, what he is and for what purpose he was created; while he is constantly urged on by a prurient imagination and an overweening confidence to make curious and uncertain venture of his conscience, his judgment, and his resolution; while, in short, he knows not the secret either of his strength or weakness; he is exposed to a thousand dangers and ten

thousand chances, the consequences of which the sharpest sight can neither foresee nor avoid.

When I consider all this, I am by no means sure that it would not have been better for Philip if his last sickness had been mortal. It will certainly be long before he finds so good a time to die. I already fancy I hear him exclaiming, in the bitterness of his heart, "Oh that I had died in the innocence of childhood!" But it cannot be.

One stormy afternoon, a year and more after the events narrated in the preceding chapter, Philip was lying stretched on the carpet before the fire, busily conning the Greek Grammar. His face had lost somewhat of its childish innocence, and a very keen observer might possibly have detected already that knowing hardness of look which intercourse with the world communicates to all but a very few more favored individuals who in some way contrive to acquire the most dangerous of all knowledge without the sacrifice of their simplicity. But his still open and ingenuous countenance is now at intervals almost convulsed with passion. In a low tone he murmurs, "present, tuptomai, tupte, tuptetai; tuptomethon, tuptesthon, tuptesthon; tuptometha, tuptesthe, tuptontai. Imperfect, etuptomen, etup—etuptomen, etup—hm! I never *can* learn it! d—m the Greek grammar! there!" and away went the unlucky duodecimo into the farthest corner of the room.

The effect of this sudden burst of passion, to compare great things with small, was similar to what followed when Eve plucked the forbidden fruit, and

"Earth gave signs of woe, that all was lost."

It was probably the first oath that had ever been uttered in that little paradise; and at such unwonted sounds the innocent chairs and tables could hardly believe their ears. The fire turned pale, and seemed about to faint; the little looking glass, with its oaken filigree frame, trembled at such a rate that it almost fell off its nail; while the tall clock standing in the corner, like Aunt Rebecca, in a suit of walnut, frowned in indignant amazement, ticking at the same time with such sudden emphasis that Philip, as if fearful it would betray him, angrily exclaimed, though without daring to look it full in the face, "Well, suppose I did say damn; you needn't make so

much noise about it!" He noticed also with strange interest the hour and the minute. "It was just twenty minutes to four," he said to himself, "the 13th day of February, 1840, when I learned to swear." So saying, he rose from his recumbent position, with a look of sullen, deep-seated pride and exultation, picked up his grammar, and then, taking his station at the window, leaned his head against the sash and looked fixedly out into the storm. It was a fiercely cold and blowing day, and the snow, hunted by the wind, swept beneath the rail fence opposite the window, and then was hurried breathlessly away over the wide expanse beyond. For ten or fifteen minutes he continued in the same position; what were his thoughts we cannot tell, but they were evidently of no pleasant or at least of no peaceful description; he seemed to find the storm congenial to his mood, and perhaps his introverted gaze saw a yet more fearful tempest in his own bosom.

Suddenly he turned from the window, and again dashing his book upon the floor, he approached the little looking glass, and amused himself with watching the fierce contortions that chased each other over his boyish face, too young and fair, alas! to be so disfigured.

While he was thus occupied, seemingly to his own great relief, and just as he had succeeded in torturing his features into an expression so demoniac, that Satan in his famous soliloquy, could hardly have surpassed it, Aunt Bethany entered the apartment. Philip turned instantly at the sound; all trace of passion had disappeared, but he blushed excessively; not, however, at being detected in an employment at once so strange and irrational, but for fear she should suspect him of looking in the glass to gratify his vanity. But Aunt Bethany had no such suspicion; she thought looking in the glass a very natural and agreeable occupation; and, I believe nothing would have given her more pleasure than a mirror of sufficient dimensions to enable her to see the whole of her little compact figure at a single glance. As the glass, which hung in the best parlor, and which was the largest in the house, was only eighteen inches by twelve, she was obliged to study her dress piecemeal, as boys study geography by maps that present only one country or continent at a time. Owing to this unfortunate circumstance, she

spent a full half hour every Sunday in preparing herself for meeting, looking first over one shoulder and then over the other, now making the politest of courtsies to see if her bonnet and cap were in the right latitude and longitude, and finally mounting into a chair to be sure that her ample skirts hung in true orthodox propriety. Aunt Rebecca, though equally exact in this particular, usually completed the ceremony about ten minutes earlier, which afforded her an excellent opportunity for reading her sister a lecture on spending so much sacred time in such an unprofitable manner.

On the appearance of Aunt Bethany, Philip took his seat by the window, and fixing his eyes on his book, strove also to fix his attention. But it would not do; he could think of nothing but the oath he had just uttered, and the new world it had opened to him. In comparison with that simple English monosyllable, all the abstruser mysteries of the Greek grammar seemed palpable and commonplace. That word cried out to him with deeper and more terrible eloquence than Homer or Demosthenes, it sounded in his ears louder than all the noise of battle of Greek and Trojan armies; he saw it printed all over every page, and the wintry wind, "that deep and dreadful organ-pipe," hummed ceaselessly that woeful burden. Some may perhaps think that it was no such mighty matter after all, and that he was making altogether too much fuss about a trifle; and I confess it has, at first blush, somewhat the appearance of weakness; but if they well consider the peculiar disadvantages under which he labored, and that only two short years before he was a mere child, they must allow that he had made full as great progress and displayed quite as much independence and magnanimity as could possibly have been expected. If he had only known before, the strange delights that were in store for him, he might have had courage to take this step much sooner; but he had been educated in such careful ignorance of his own slavish condition, that he had never even suspected the joys of freedom. The pleasure which this feeling now afforded him was of the most peculiar character, and totally different from any he had ever experienced before. As far as he could analyze it at all, it resembled more closely than any thing else the pleasure of skating over ice so thin that if he stopped a single moment it would break beneath him; or of crossing—

"A current roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear."

And here, as there may possibly be some so utterly devoid of genius, of such a low and groveling temper as never to have felt the pleasure I allude to, or even to deny its existence altogether, I would beg leave to ask them one simple question: Can it be doubted that Eve felt a sensation of pleasure, aside from the mere gratification of appetite, when she first tasted the forbidden fruit? Was there no mysterious, pungent relish of that first mortal sin, almost worth the destruction of a world? That was indeed a happiness that could never be enjoyed but once. All the sweetness the world contained was squeezed out for her dainty appetite, and nothing but the heel-taps remain for her descendants. But to each new-born, tender soul there comes a time, if life is long enough, when something like this happiness may be experienced; and if we are not so fortunate as our common mother in having the first sip from the sparkling glass, and if the keen edge of our enjoyment is somewhat blunted by previous indulgence, yet our first great transgression can hardly fail to excite the most novel and delightful sensations. Not by any means that all are equally blessed in this particular, for a great deal depends on the previous habits of every individual; and, other things being equal, we may safely conclude that he will enjoy the most who, up to that time, has practiced the most rigid self-denial, just as some cunning epicures gain an appetite for dinner by fasting all the morning. Those, on the contrary, who are accustomed to this pleasure from their earliest years, can never be said truly to enjoy it, for this simple reason, that they lack the essential element of surprise, or novelty, without which there is hardly any gratification whatever but soon becomes altogether vapid and intolerable.

This pleasure, however, like all others of a like violent nature, is liable to be soon exhausted; and here an excellent opportunity presents itself for a very learned and ingenious disquisition; but I shall reserve this for some other occasion, and at present content myself with a few brief observations, by which anyone can learn how to obtain the greatest possible amount of enjoyment from the practice we are now considering.

In the first place, then, it is evident that the greatest moderation is here required, and indeed, this simple rule is of such importance that, unless it is attended to, our enjoyment will be ended almost as soon as it is begun.

Secondly, very much depends upon the order of our proceedings. The wisest way is to commence with such simple and comparatively innocent phrases as that made use of by Philip, and when they have become too familiar any longer to titillate our palate, we can then proceed to others a little stronger, till we come at last to those tremendous blasphemies beyond which there is no advance of novelty in this world, and possibly in that which is to come.

It is amazing how much is lost by not knowing, or not sufficiently observing these regulations, for after the appetite is once cloyed by excessive indulgence, it is impossible ever again to restore its former sensibility; so that, while the habit still remains, it ceases to afford the slightest satisfaction.

Aside from this pleasure, however, which is purely of an abstract nature, and can be enjoyed in a high degree only by those who are possessed of the most delicate moral organization, there is another advantage arising from this habit, and which I do not remember to have seen noticed by any philosopher. It is well known that men of a nervous and excitable temper are most addicted to this vice, or rather virtue, as it should be called in this connection, and the more violent their passion, the more eagerly they fly to it for relief. Hence we may reasonably infer that this part of speech has been purposely provided as a sort of safety-valve to prevent the evil consequences that would ensue if all those elements of malice, envy, and the like, should be pent up in the boiling breast of their possessor. It may, in fact, be considered as a sort of moral volcano, whose eruptions, though in themselves sufficiently terrible, should yet be regarded as positively salutary, since they prevent the recurrence of earthquakes, the consequences of which might be far more tremendous. Or it might be likened to a purge or emetic, by which the system is relieved of a vast quantity of noxious matter that would otherwise result in gout or fever; and indeed, I remember hearing a very good man, a Quaker, after listening a while with evident satisfaction to an explo-

sion of this sort, and seeing the orator apparently about to pause, exclaim, with nice appreciation of the principle I am illustrating, "Swear away, friend! swear away! Thee will never be well till thee gets all that bad stuff out of thee!"

I had once also the pleasure of being acquainted with a gentleman of parts and learning, a school-master, who, after being for several hours vexed by the various trials incident to his profession, used to relieve himself as soon as he got into the open air by a succession of curses, not loud but deep, so that by the time he arrived at home, which was at the distance of about a mile, he was restored to his usual equanimity, and enabled to meet his friends with perfect composure. Indeed, this simple practice operated so successfully that he was regarded by all his acquaintance as a gentleman of infinite good humor; and if it had not been for his candid confession, I should never have suspected him of standing in need of any such purgation.

To finish the subject by a still closer application, I am myself so sensible of the delights afforded by this habit, and of the piquancy that may thereby be communicated to a very dull narrative, that, aside from a certain vulgar regard for decency and religion, I should have peppered my whole history plentifully with this sort of seasoning. However, as I make no claims to the despotic authority exercised by a certain cook or artist, who dismissed his master for presuming to salt his own soup, each reader can, if he chooses, supply any deficiency according to his individual palate; and for this purpose, I will hereafter furnish chapters, like the present, where he can swear away to his heart's content.

Many will now doubtless be ready to conclude that Philip, having made so fortunate a commencement, would not stop short until he had entirely emancipated himself from the restraints of early education; which, though they may answer a very useful purpose while we are yet too young to have any opinion of our own, should be thrown off as soon as possible, like the shell of a lobster, lest they cramp our growing powers, and so prevent their full and perfect development. Thus, having learned to swear, lying and stealing naturally follow, and in their turn prepare the way for those still grander attainments, which, simply because they interfere with its own interest, society has so unjustly

stigmatized as crimes, and even dared to punish with imprisonment and death. But when we consider the force of early associations, which men of the greatest wisdom and hardihood have never been able entirely to subdue, the capricious partiality of conscience, and the despotic sway of public opinion—when we consider, in short, all the obstacles that a young man situated like our hero would have to contend with, we can no longer wonder that his courage and resolution should here have failed him, nor that, content with having given one such proof of spirit, he should have retired from the contest, and submitted henceforth to be recast in the same arbitrary mould as all around him. Yet could he not altogether deny himself the gratification arising from the habit we have been discussing; but whenever any thing occurred to disturb his tranquillity, as for instance any unusual difficulty in his lessons, or any extraordinary act of tyranny on the part of Aunt Rebecca, or when, without any particular reason, he was out of sorts, he found no other sedative so effectual as a good hearty fit of swearing; by which I can not doubt his moral constitution was greatly benefited; though, as in most other cases of allopathic practice, the remedy would by many be considered worse than the disease. Sometimes, but that was when he was in tolerably good humor, he used to startle Mary with a display of this accomplishment, and on such occasions her unaffected amazement and admiration wonderfully enhanced his pleasure; indeed, I believe he never loved her so well as when, having exhausted entreaty, her tears confessed the abundance of her sympathy.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RIVALS.

We come now to an event in the history of our hero so important in itself, and so far more momentous in its consequences, that we feel called upon to change the simple and familiar style we have employed thus far, for one more worthy the pomp and dignity of the occasion. The short-sighted or ill-natured may, indeed, assert that we seek thus, by swelling and empty phrases, to hide the real littleness of our subject, just as certain poets have illustrated in heroic verse the battles of the frogs and mice, or of the cranes and pigmies. I am very willing, however, to be classed in such good company, and certainly, if those noble geniuses have thought that the affairs of such feeble and insignificant creatures as frogs and cranes could afford either instruction or amusement to their readers, then nothing that concerns an intelligent being can possibly be considered unworthy of our serious attention. Indeed, there are many things that, taken by themselves, seem to have no importance whatever, but which, viewed in relation to others, suddenly assume the most astounding consequence. The wisest of mankind, in reviewing his past life, can hardly fail to be both mortified and amazed at the want of purpose and consistency it displays, and at finding how much that he had attributed to his own skill and foresight, was really the work of chance, by which, I mean of Providence, and of circumstances apparently the most trifling and inconsiderable. It is both a curious and instructive exercise to trace in this way the history of a single day, and see what it is that has given color to our thoughts, conclusion to our acts, and direction to our purposes. We shall thus find that a word, a look, turning up one street rather than another, being a moment too early or too late, an unexpected meeting; or, in short, that any thing whatever, happening when it did and where it did and

how it did, has exerted an influence altogether disproportioned to its intrinsic importance, and may more than once have changed our whole future career. Lines imperceptibly diverging, bring us at last as far asunder as the poles. Napoleon, as he often declared, missed his destiny at Acre; but, though the instances were not so apparent, there was probably hardly a day in his life when the same assertion might not have been made with equal truth. Indeed, we all of us miss our destiny continually; every hour gives the lie to our calculations, and we find an Acre at every step. Every act of our lives depends upon so many unforeseen contingencies; every result demands so many causes, without the least of which it could not have happened, that one is almost ready to wonder how we ever do any thing at all.

Every one has heard of the famous bucket of Bologna, and of the terrible war which it occasioned: it has indeed become canonized in history, since it caused more blood to be shed than would have filled it a thousand times over; yet the far more terrible battle which I am about to describe, had its origin in something, if possible, still more insignificant. Before I come to it, however, I must pause a moment to recover breath, and give some account of the contending parties.

Philip was now in his twelfth year. I mention this not on account of any intrinsic importance it may possess, but that the reader may henceforth treat him with the respect and consideration due to this advanced age, and may be somewhat prepared for those acts of heroism that are to follow, and which would seem altogether out of character in a boy. As to other matters, if the reader is curious to know, he was tall and strong for his age—a good scholar, though from pride only, for he hated both Greek and Latin, and would much rather have played six hours than study one. He was, moreover, a great gormandizer of books, and devoured indiscriminately all that came in his way; though fairy legends, and tales of travel and adventure, were the subjects in which he most delighted. Alexander and Robinson Crusoe were his favorite heroes—he hardly knew how to choose between them; but, thanks to a supple and accommodating imagination, he succeeded in reconciling those characters so diverse and inconsistent, and thus lived

in a happy alternation between the throne of Persia and the still more despotic empire of that delicious isle—delicious through all time—in comparison with which the Fortunate Islands of the Atlantic, or those, still more blissful, seen in the Vision of Mirza, are but as a farthing candle to the sun. Indeed, nothing less than a pencil dipped in the gorgeous melancholy of sunset clouds, could paint, in sufficiently soft yet glowing colors, those scenes of exquisite delight, as they rose in his fancy's eye; nor could any heart that had not itself shared in those emotions, comprehend the absorbing happiness with which he sailed with Xury along the coast of Africa, in the boat with the shoulder-of-mutton sail—pushed his loaded raft into the sheltered creek—built his miniature fortification—or wandered, with dog and gun and umbrella, through those enchanted groves.

But to end this rhapsody, for which I grievously fear I shall incur the contempt of all sensible and respectable people, this sort of reading, besides furnishing our hero with subject of various and delightful contemplation, did furthermore nourish and strengthen in him a certain high-strung and romantic magnanimity; as if, forsooth, there was, or possibly could be, any similarity between him and Alexander, or the other heroes he had read about; or as if a little village urchin like him had any right to imitate such a royal and aristocratic virtue. But as historians, in setting forth the character of some distinguished personage, are always eager to avail themselves of the principle of contrast, by which both vice and virtue are made to appear in a clearer light, so in our own case there is no better way to exhibit the virtues and weaknesses of our hero, than a comparison between him and one of his companions, who has already been mentioned in this narrative, and will hereafter occupy a yet more prominent position.

Peter Redwood was a year older than Philip. His eyes were blue, his face was round, and his head was covered with thick brown curls. As Philip had formed his character, in a very considerable degree, from the contemplation of those heroes who are most likely, by their bold and careless nobility, to charm the fancy of an ingenuous youth, so it might have been thought that Peter, if his acquaintance

with history had been more extensive, had chosen that renowned patriot, Maledict Arnold, for his model. But, lest any simple-minded reader should suddenly conceive, from this statement, too high a respect and admiration for this young gentleman, and should straightway proceed to invest him with all the dignity of a Nero or a Cataline, he must consider, also, the cruel perversities of fortune by which so many ingenious and enterprising youths are compelled to pass their days in obscurity and neglect, simply for want of an opportunity. Thus, though Peter had received from nature, as the most envious must have allowed, most, if not all, the qualifications that go to make up the amiable characters just referred to, and might, under a more favorable conjunction of circumstances, have attained to the same pinnacle of renown; yet his lot being unfortunately cast in our humble village, where he found no adequate sphere for the exercise of his unrivaled abilities, it is highly probable, that but for me, posterity would never have heard his name. And this is, perhaps, the greatest source of satisfaction to the impartial and justice-loving historian, that he is thus enabled to rescue modest merit from oblivion, and to reverse, as it were, the hasty and imperfect judgment of the world by his superior knowledge and penetration.

All the little boys in the village, and all the cats and dogs into the bargain, if they could be brought up in a body, would, I am sure, take delight in testifying that Peter was formed to rule; the apple orchards in the neighborhood showed his absolute fitness for predatory warfare; while the prudence with which he conducted all his operations, was such as could not but arouse our warmest admiration. He never attacked an enemy stronger than himself, but confined his attentions entirely to those whom fortune seems to have expressly designed for such a purpose; and in this, I think it may be shown, that he acted in strict accordance with both instinct and reason. The folly of meddling with those who have more strength than we, is too obvious to be disputed; it is, in fact, a flying in the face of Providence; but it would be a shameful abuse of our rights and privileges, not to torment all who happen to be weaker than we, as much as we find agreeable to our own inclinations. The very difference between us—the simple fact that they are weak and

we are strong—seems, to a reflecting mind. to imply that we have such a right, just as lungs imply the existence of air; as a stomach would be of no use without a dinner; or, in short, as every faculty that is given us implies a corresponding means of gratification.

Peter thoroughly understood this principle; nor was he at all backward in its application; for, indeed, he was no visionary theorizer, but practical as an old-fashioned New England sermon. He never forgot one of his rights, nor suffered it to grow rusty, for want of use. But of all those who assisted him in keeping this particular right in exercise, the isolated family of blacks, already mentioned, were most conspicuous. It was really surprising how much they could endure; so that one knew not at which to wonder most—their capacity for receiving, or Peter's ingenuity in inventing, new methods of annoyance. The mind experienced the same sort of pleasure from this correspondence as is always afforded by any striking instance of fitness or congruity; and, indeed, a turtle is not more evidently intended to be eaten by aldermen, nor aldermen for the eating of turtle; a pretty woman is not more evidently made to be kissed, nor an egg-shell to be cracked, nor straws for sucking cider, nor the Philadelphia mint for mint-juleps, nor a shingle to whittle, nor a Yankee to whittle it, nor the wind for flying kites, nor buckwheat for flap-jacks, than Peter to torment and they to be tormented.

Nothing could be more edifying than the vigor and perseverance that characterized all his operations; he kicked and cuffed the younger members of the family with the most striking impartiality; he hooted after the elder Buttons, if they ever ventured into the street—broke their window—laid waste their garden; and finally crowned his exploits, and frightened the whole family half out of their wits, by dropping a large black cat down the chimney, while they were at supper. Even Philip, in spite of his unhappy monomania, could not help perceiving the extraordinary merit of this action, which called forth the rapturous applause of all the other boys in the village.

There was no reason in the world why he should not have derived as much gratification from this source, as Peter himself; but unfortunately, he had so poisoned his mind by

that sort of reading, above mentioned, and had imbibed such fantastic notions about self-respect, generosity, magnanimity, and the like high-flown sentiments—which, indeed, do very well in books, but have nothing to do with the actual conduct of life—that he could no longer perceive the true fitness of things, and could never be brought, except when in very ill-humor, to bestow upon those beneath him the insults and injuries which they had a right to expect at his hands. In this respect, then, it must be allowed that Peter was immeasurably his superior; he had never read any of those romantic stories; and if he had, his good sense would, I doubt not, have rendered their dangerous example entirely powerless.

Nor was this the only difference between the character of the two rivals, nor the only instance in which Peter manifested his superiority. Philip, whether accused justly or unjustly, never sought to shield himself at the expense of another. He had persuaded himself by some process of reasoning which probably few of my readers will understand, that there was a sort of merit in receiving a punishment that by good rights belonged to another—a species of theft which I am sure Peter was much too honest ever to practice. Indeed our hero once carried this principle so far as to submit to a severe and protracted castigation, when a simple denial would at once have freed him from suspicion. I must do him the justice to add, however, that this occurred just after he had been inflaming his conceit by reading an anecdote of Napoleon, in which it was related how that truly great man, being then, indeed, only in his seventh year, when it is natural to suppose that he was not so wise as he was afterwards, held out three days against the undeserved anger of his parents, rather than betray the real offender.

Peter had also read the same story, and his comments upon it showed that he was a greater man than Napoleon, and that if fortune had placed him in the same situation, his character would have betrayed none of those flaws and inconsistencies which impulsive fools like Philip may admire, but which provoke only the anger and derision of the truly wise.

I trust I have now said enough to show the essential difference between these two tempers, and that my readers

are as ready as they ever can be to recognize the astonishing superiority of Peter in all that constitutes a truly noble and excellent character. Yet such is the fallibility of human judgment that I should hardly be surprised if some should incline to the contrary opinion, especially when I consider that Philip was certainly the greater favorite with his schoolmates, though this may easily be accounted for by envy, or by their not having arrived at the proper age fully to enter into the merits of so delicate a question. Finally, to end this comparison in a philosophic manner, by an inquiry into the causes of so decided a contrast, Peter's superiority was owing in my judgment entirely to his freedom from that faculty called imagination, a faculty of all others the most mischievous in its consequences, inasmuch as it leads its possessors into all sorts of freaks and vagaries, fills their heads with the most absurd and impracticable notions, and, in short, does more harm in a day than prudence, judgment, caution, common sense, and the like, can undo in a month.

Having delayed so long, we now hasten to the catastrophe which we promised in the beginning of the chapter, and which, though it was of such momentous consequences, was brought about by an instrument so simple that probably some of my readers may object to it as incredible, and others as unworthy the heroic dignity of our narrative.

One pleasant Wednesday afternoon, immediately after dinner, Philip was commissioned by Aunt Rebecca to go to the other end of the village, to the house of Colonel Button, to obtain his assistance, or that of some of his family, in weeding the garden.

On learning his errand, Mrs. Button declared, "She was dreffful sorry it hadn't been some other day; but everybody was so busy, and, somehow 'nother, they couldn't none of 'em get along without the 'sistance and cuperation of the colonel; but there was Benjamin, they could have him and welcome—he wan't very big, to be sure, but that was all the better pulling up weeds, for he didn't have to stoop so far as other folks."

This proposition was indeed self-evident, as Benjamin, though in his thirteenth year, was so diminutive in his proportions that his head hardly came up to Philip's shoulder.

He possessed, however, as is usual in such cases, an intelligence and sensibility beyond his years, and the soul that was lodged in his little ugly carcass was as much a soul as the highest seraph.

The two boys left the house together, Philip keeping somewhat proudly a little in advance, till they came to the green in front of the post-office, where Peter Redwood and a number of his companions were assembled at the foot of a large elm, engaged in the interesting and classic game of hide-and-go-seek. They had apparently but just commenced, and Peter was in the very act of repeating one of those puzzling and cabalistic formularies by which the schoolboys of New England are wont to invoke the fates to determine "who shall be it;" a question, it would seem, of too great importance to be decided by any less imposing ceremonial.

"Wonery, vonery, ickery a;
Fillisy, follisy, Nicholas Jay;
Pee paw, it must be done;
Twinkle, twankle, twenty-one;"

cried Peter; "hurra! I'm out! but look! here comes Shirt Button; now won't we have some fun? and at the word all the players ceased from their sport, as General Putnam from his ploughing, the moment the first note of war fell upon their ears.

As when a little mouse, having ventured from its hole, walks boldly across the cellar floor to the well-known safe where the careful housewife has deposited her stores of mellow cheese, but if perchance he spies the fierce grimalkin couched expectant in a corner, his little heart goes pitapat, he stands pale with fright, and doubts which way to run; so the unhappy Benjamin no sooner perceived the presence of his natural foe than he suddenly halted, and seemed to meditate instant flight.

"What you stopping for? why don't you come along?"

"I'm afraid of Pete Redwood, he's going to lick me!"

"What for?"

"Oh! I dunno; he's always a licking on me."

"Well, he won't touch you, now you're with me; so come along! I'll tell him not to."

"He won't care for that a bit."

"Yes he will too, I tell you! I won't let him touch you; so come on!"

"Hallo!" cried Peter, "what's your hurry, Cap'n Curry? What you going to do with little Shirt Button? Here, stop a bit; what d'you call me names for t'other day? hay?"

"I didn't call you names."

"Don't you tell me! take that," cried Peter, thus politely urging upon his acceptance what he would otherwise perhaps have been too modest to receive.

"Here! let him alone!" cried Philip; "what's the use?"

"What's the use? I want to have a little fun, that's all."

"Well, why can't you let a fellow alone some o' the time, and not be forever picking on him in that way? He's going up to our house, and I'm in a hurry."

"Why don't you go then? the sooner you start, the quicker you'll get, and I'll send Shirt Button after you, only I am going to touch him up a little first. Stand off! if you don't you'll catch it."

The attitude of the two champions was now highly imposing. All the other boys had hastily retired to a respectful distance, and were now busily employed in inflaming their ardor by crying, "Stand up to him! Pitch into him! That's the way to say it! That's the stuff for trowsers!" and other ancient and well-known war cries, which have been heard on as many and as famous fields of battle as Saint George for merry England! My merry men, fight on! Cock-a-doodle do! or in short any of those swelling slogans by which opposing chieftains have been wont to exasperate their valor. Peter, red with rising passion, yet loath to proceed to actual hostilities with so popular a rival, sought to drive him from the field by the most tremendous threats, which, being delivered in that sort of metaphor or allegory common to schoolboys, had a yet more terrific sound. "On the other side, collecting all his might, Philip dilated stood, and like a comet burned, that fires the length of Orphiucus huge, and from his horrid hair shakes pestilence and war;" though to tell the truth, he was mortally afraid, and would gladly, like the same comet, at the approach of the moon, or a little dog, at the approach of a bigger, have run away

with his tail between his legs, before exchanging a single blow.

But, though Philip wished himself most heartily at home, and even repented of having meddled in the matter at all, he was much too proud to betray this weakness. On the contrary, he entered into the fight with such unguarded impetuosity, that he lost all the advantage he might have derived from his superior powers of endurance; and here I might draw a very apt illustration from the battle of Flodden, and, indeed, most of those between the Scotch and English, in which, as is well known, the former were almost invariably defeated simply from not knowing how to stand still. Thus, in this instance, to the great disappointment of the spectators, the battle had hardly begun before it was finished by a tremendous blow, that, being delivered precisely between the eyes, at once put Philip hors-de-combat, and left him no inclination to continue the contest. A bull-dog, a game-cock, or an Irishman might not have been so easily satisfied; but Philip was a reasoning animal, his mind was open to conviction, and he discerned so clearly the inutility of any farther effort, that he determined to rest contented for the present with the experience he had already gained, and defer a repetition of the experiment to a more favorable opportunity.

Rising from the ground, he brushed the dirt from his dress with scrupulous care; and, without once looking at his antagonist, turned his back on the playground, and walked slowly away, deaf to the jeers and insults that were hurled after him, and, but for an excessive paleness, as calm to all outward show as if nothing had happened. Carefully avoiding the presence of Aunt Rebecca, he slunk like a thief into the barn, and there, stretched on his face in a retired corner, he abandoned himself to the tempest of passion that seemed to tear his soul to shreds. He cursed the day that he was born; he prayed that the barn might fall and crush him, or that the earth might open and swallow him up; then transferring his fury to the innocent cause of his disgrace, he lavished upon Benjamin the bitterest execrations his frenzy could suggest. He bit his lips, he tore his hair, and rushed about the barn in an agony of despair; till, having somewhat exhausted his passion and recovered

the use of his reason, he spent another hour in devising schemes of impossible vengeance, and in soothing his mortification with the thought of what he would do if he were possessed of irresponsible power, if he were a king for instance, or a magician.

But by degrees his better feelings prevailed; he reproached himself for indulging in such a mean and revengeful temper, discarded all thoughts of vengeance, and after washing from his face as far as possible all traces of his brief contest with Peter, and the far severer conflict with himself, he hastened into the garden, where the fresh air and vigorous exercise soon restored his serenity.

His work was now finished, and little Ben prepared to go; but first peeping over the fence, he saw his unrelenting enemy still leaning against the tall elm. Philip saw his concern, and also looking over the fence at once detected its cause. "Never mind!" he said, "I'll go with you."

The reader will perhaps be a little surprised at this determination, but he cannot possibly be more puzzled than Philip himself. Without stopping, however, to inquire into the nature of so sudden a resolution, he checked at once all rising scruples with a fierce "I will!" and walked boldly down the street. But Benjamin was not so ready; "I'd rather you wouldn't," he whispered, pulling Philip by the sleeve.

"Why!" cried Philip, "what's the matter now?"

"I'd rather take a beating myself," replied Ben, with a glance at the black eye Philip had received in his defense, "I'm used to it!"

Philip seemed rather perplexed at this answer; he looked with sympathetic admiration at the sooty hero before him, then turned away, to conceal a tear that "glistened, but fell not." "So shall I be, bimeby, perhaps; but don't be a fool now, but come along! if you don't I'm going alone, that's all about it!"

Ben was not mistaken; Peter was still waiting for him, and had persuaded most of the other boys to do the same, promising them some rare sport when Shirt Button came along that way again. He could hardly believe his own eyes when he saw Ben approaching in company with Philip, and discovered from the countenance of the latter that he

in tended, if necessary, againto do battle in defense of his humble protege. In spite of his previous victory, this consideration would have deterred him from any hostile demonstration, but the presence of his companions and the boastful assurances he had made to them, left him no way of escape. So assuming a fierce and disdainful air, he advanced towards Philip exclaiming "Well! I thought I'd given you enough for one day, but if you want any more, I'm ready for you; but you wont get off so easy this time, I can tell you that, my fine fellow! so if you know when you're well off, you'll clear out o' this pretty quick."

"I shall go as soon as I get ready," replied Philip, "and no sooner; but I didn't come here to fight, I —"

"What did you come for then? you think you're going to stop me from flogging that black rascal, do you? but you'll find yourself grandly mistaken; it 'ould take two just like you, and then you couldn't."

To this Philip only replied that he would see, whereupon Peter rejoined that he *should* see; and the next moment without farther ado, both being all ready for the fray,

> "With foot and hand, and eye opposed,
> In dubious strife, they darkly closed."

As the result of the former encounter had inspired Peter with the utmost confidence in his own prowess and an overweening contempt for his adversary, so it had taught Philip the necessity of greater caution and of supplying as far as possible his want of strength by his superior vigor and endurance. Yet could he not avoid receiving a blow or two, which, however, as they did not reach any very tender part, in nowise diminished either his strength or courage; while, on the other hand, Peter, furious at this unexpected opposition, grew every moment more unguarded. But not to dwell any longer on a scene that harmonizes so ill with the calm and peaceful flow of our narration, suffice it to say that this long and hard-fought battle was at length brought to a close by the utter discomfiture of Peter, who slunk away from the field covered with blood and dust, and trembling with fatigue and passion, so that he could hardly stand. Half the boys in the village were spectators of this heroic combat, that surpassed all they had ever witnessed in the

spirit and obstinacy with which it was contested; and for years afterwards, they used to refer to the fight between Phil Hastings and Pete Redwood, with the same pride and exultation that a revolutionary hero displays in talking of Lexington and Bunker Hill.

Colonel Totling and Squire Buckle had also watched the progress of the battle with the greatest ardor, and had laid a wager on the result, the colonel betting two to one on Peter. The squire had even advanced a few paces from the post-office to obtain a clearer view; and when Dr. Edgerly, who just then passed that way, was about to separate the two combatants, the squire interfered and begged him to let things take their natural course, as otherwise the wager could not be decided, at the same time assuring him that the boys would be none the worse for a little bit of a tussle, and would be better friends after it than ever. Indeed, so far was the squire transported by this exciting spectacle, that when it was concluded he could not forbear laying hands on the colonel and challenging him to a wrestling match; but this proposition was declined with so much haste and trepidation as would have left a doubt of the colonel's courage, if it had not been thoroughly established by many a great and famous training, where the tremendous energy with which he brandished his gleaming sword and shouted on his staggering followers, showed him to be the most invincible hero that ever bestraddled a watermelon.

Peter returned home, in much the same condition as Philip had done before; but instead of betaking himself to the barn for consolation, he went directly, to show himself to his father and mother, either because he was sure of thus arousing their sympathy, or because the exceeding frankness and nobility of his temper rendered him totally averse to anything like deception.

Deacon Redwood was not a man to be disturbed by trifles, or to break out into foolish and unnecessary exclamations. As to his wife on the other hand, amazement kept her dumb, so they both stared at Peter without speaking, the deacon amusing himself according to his wont, by endeavoring to find out as much as possible before proceeding to direct interrogation, in which, in this instance, he would have had no difficulty if he could have thought of any boy large

enough and daring enough to occasion the phenomenon before him. Peter knew his father's humor, so he also stood still and said nothing.

"Who with?" said the deacon.

"Phil Hastings," replied Peter.

"And what, may I ask, was the occasion of this mighty quarrel? was it a ball, or a knife, or that wonderful thing called honor, or was it simply for the love of it that you have been pommeling each other at such a fashion?"

Peter reddened a little at this question; but, whether because he felt the sarcasm, or found it difficult to answer without criminating Philip, I cannot say with any certainty, he hesitated a moment, and then replied, speaking very rapidly, "'Twasn't my fault at all; I was out there in front of the post-office with some other fellers, and Phil Hastings, he come along and stumped me to fight; and then he struck me, and I struck him, and so—and so we had to fight it out."

"I might ha' known it," cried Mrs Redwood; "it's that nasty good-for-nothing Phil Hastings; first he stole my plums, and now you see what he's done. I declare it's shameful! wonder he didn't kill him and done with it! but I'll go right straight over to the widow's, and give her a piece of my mind. I'll see whether such doings is to be permitted in Totemwell any longer; for I'll tell you what, either that boy or me has got to leave this village. Shameful, shameful!"

"Now, my dear, I wouldn't go over there if I were you, it will only make trouble."

"And suppose it does make trouble; am I going to set still and see my own child, or if he isn't my own child I love him better than some that do; but you never cared when he stole my plums, and I don't believe you'd say a word if he should set the house on fire; and it's my private opinion he will, too, some o' these days. But I've got a tongue in my head, and I guess I know how to use it; so come along Peter this minute!"

"Hadn't you better let me?"

"Well! I don't care who goes, if you only talk up to 'em, and let 'em know we ain't agoing to be imposed upon; but you are always so dreadful meechin and mealy mouthed

about every thing. I know they think 'cause my folks use'd to live down to White Oaks, that I ain't as good as they be; but Aunt Rebecca needn't carry her nose so high for all that; everybody knows who *she* is. But are you going over there or not? 'cause if you ain't, I am."

"Yes! I'm going."

"And, Peter, do you go along at the same time, so they can see what a perfect tantamount that Phil Hastings is."

"Oh no! there's no need of his going."

Peter looked first at his father and then at his mother, and, as usual, decided the safest way was to obey the latter.

The deacon proceeded directly to the Widow Grant's, and being ushered by Mary into the little parlor, requested to see both the ladies as soon as possible. Aunt Bethany instantly obeyed the summons, for Mary's account had, as she said thrown her into a dreadful twitter; but Aunt Rebecca did not make her appearance for full one minute and a quarter, partly to show her philosophic indifference, and partly that she might enter with becoming dignity. We are bound to confess, however, that even she started a little at sight of Peter's swollen and blood-stained features, and rubbed her eyes as if to convince herself that what she saw had an actual existence, and was no creation of a disordered imagination.

"I perceive," said the deacon, "that you are shocked at witnessing this painful spectacle, and perhaps I have done wrong in thus wounding your sensibilities. I certainly should never have ventured on such a step with any other lady; but your well-known energy and strength of mind, and I believe I may say intrepidity of purpose, encouraged me to——" Here the deacon hemmed and hawed, and Aunt Rebecca began to purr as loud as she could; that is to say, she testified her content in her usual way by slightly drawing herself up, and fixing her eyes modestly on the toe of her right foot, at the same time assuring the deacon that he had done perfectly right, though she confessed she was somewhat at a loss to conjecture the object of his visit.

"I hardly know how to begin," said the deacon, "lest what I have to relate should seem to imply a doubt, as if you had not displayed your customary sagacity in a matter that requires perhaps more of those qualities than almost any

other. But this is a matter in which no one is competent to advise you, and if you have failed, I am sure that no one else could have succeeded."

"Well sir!" cried Aunt Rebecca, her curiosity painfully exasperated by this mysterious introduction, "and what is it in which I have failed, I should be glad to know?"

"I don't say you *have* failed; I only say *if* you have failed, no one else could have succeeded, and indeed, I believe you have done all that could be done; but there are some natures so stubborn as to yield neither to kindness nor severity. In short, if Philip Hastings had not been one of the worst boys in the world, he would have been by this time the very best."

"Philip Hastings! and what has he been doing?"

"Perhaps you won't think it any thing so very bad; my feelings as a father may have warped my judgment; though I must say that before this thing happened, I had conceived the very highest opinion of the young man, and even now——"

"But you don't tell us what it is he's been doing!"

"Well, if I must undertake this unwelcome office, I trust you will excuse it, though I would rather you had heard it from anyone else than me. But you see the condition my son is in?"

Aunt Rebecca nodded assent.

"Well, after what you have seen, I trust no farther explanation is necessary, and indeed, it is easy to see that you already grasp the whole merits of the question. But who could have expected such wickedness in one so young? I have always prided myself on my skill in judging of character, but I must allow that in this instance I was altogether wrong. He's a very remarkable boy; don't you think so, Mrs. Grant?"

"Why, goodness me!" cried Aunt Bethany, "I was never so struck up with any thing in my life—it seems so strange—I can't imagine. Phil is pretty touchy, to be sure, sometimes, but I never knew him to do any thing like that; why, it's really dreadful! I can't for the life o' me imagine what could ha' possessed him. What would his father and mother say if they was to hear of it? They'd think we hadn't been taking very good care of his morals, I'm afraid."

"Why, how you talk!" cried Aunt Rebecca, "just as if we had power to change the heart! I'm sure every thing has been done that could be done; and if it's all been in vain, no one has any right to blame me. For my part, I'm not at all surprised at what has happened; I've been expecting something like it every day. He may be cunning enough to deceive other folks, but he can't deceive me. I've seen how it would be from the commencement; and the very first time I ever laid eyes on that boy, I knew him just as well exactly as I do now. I told sister Bethany then, we should have trouble with him some time or other; but she'd never believe me, and now I hope she's satisfied."

"Well," said the deacon, "I must confess he was too much for me, but I believe nothing escapes your penetration. But what course do you propose to pursue? You would hardly, I should suppose, have resolution sufficient to send him back to his parents?"

"Indeed! but I have though; for my part, sister, I think that's the very best thing we can do, and the sooner it's done the better."

"Well," replied Aunt Bethany, "I spose you're right, though he's been here so long I can't bear to think of his going away, and he's been such a good boy, too!" and the good lady took off her spectacles to wipe away the tears that bore silent witness to the virtues of our hero.

"I suppose you will write to his father to-morrow?" suggested the deacon.

"I shall write to-night!" said Aunt Rebecca, and whoever had heard her, would have needed no farther description in order to understand her whole character.

This difficulty being thus disposed of, the deacon gave Peter permission to return home, but remained himself a while longer, to discuss certain matters in which Aunt Rebecca was more interested than perhaps any other. And indeed, the subject to which she now led the conversation, and which was no less than the religious character of her acquaintance, must be allowed by all right-minded persons to be second in importance to only one other, and that is the religious character of ourselves. The great mistake that too many here fall into, is not in over-estimating the former of these interests, but in supposing that any degree of attention

to that will justify the total neglect of the other. I would not, however, be thought to imply that Aunt Rebecca was guilty of indulging in so dangerous a charity. I have sadly misrepresented the character of this good lady, if the reader supposes from any thing he has found in this history, that hypocrisy or insincerity formed any part of her disposition. Her little innocent strategems could not impose upon a lamb, and even her attempts at deception only betrayed her ingrain honesty. If she ever succeeded in deceiving any one, it was in making them believe that she was a great deal worse than she really was; for, except the infirmity of her temper, and perhaps a little touch of envy, there were few persons easier to get along with than Aunt Rebecca. Finally, we must remember that she was the sister of Aunt Bethany, and was, after all, not so very unlike her as the short-sighted gossips of the village were wont to imagine. Deacon Redwood knew her better when he said that there wasn't a hair to choose between them, and that he could play on one as easy as on the other, only in a different key. The deacon was the only one who had sufficient penetration to make this discovery, and he had made such excellent use of it that Aunt Rebecca treated him with greater respect, and allowed him to have greater influence on her conduct and opinion than all the rest of Totemwell put together, Squire Moody not excepted.

The fear with which Squire Moody inspired Aunt Rebecca was in itself the very reason why she had so little regard for his opinion. It alarmed her pride, aroused her jealousy, and drove her at once into opposition. When in his presence, she acted all the while like a prudent general in an enemy's country, who is constantly on the offensive, and never relaxes his vigilance for a moment, for fear of a surprise. To use a more homely illustration, he could not come near her but her back was up in an instant.

Like as the sleek grimalkin, reposing on the warm rug, gazes placidly into the fire, and meditates with aldermanic complacency on the plump mouse, on whose tender limbs she has feasted; but if perchance Watch or Towser stalks into the apartment, instantly she quits her recumbent position, rouses all her slumbering powers, erects her back into an arch of prophetic triumph, and spits defiance at the in-

truder, so did Aunt Rebecca gather herself together, and stand boldly on the defensive at the approach of Squire Moody.

But if, in this posture of affairs, some gentle maiden sends Towser back to the kennel, and, stooping down, strokes with softest hand the back of her favorite, while she murmurs, "Poor kitty, poor kitty," the sagacious animal, grateful for her caresses, smooths her ruffled spirits and sinks luxuriously back to her "*dolce far niente*," purring forth the while her appreciation of that delicious flattery, so did Aunt Rebecca under the deacon's skillful manipulation.

As he himself was almost entirely free from vanity, so he found no difficulty in flattering that of the lady. He was perfectly willing to leave her in full and comfortable consciousness of her own fancied superiority, provided he carried off all the fruits of victory—unlike some shallow and conceited disputants of my acquaintance, who, in their anxiety to display their own talents and obtain the admiration of their opponent, lose sight of the real object of pursuit. Such, however, are almost always sure to miss their aim; for, nothing gives us so low an opinion of another's understanding, as his having got the better of us in an argument.

"Don't you think there has been some increase of interest among our people lately?" said Aunt Rebecca, with an abruptness that was not unusual to her, and which often left her hearers in considerable doubt as to the subject of her inquiry.

"A very decided increase," said the deacon.

"I wish Squire Buckle could be brought to feel a little more serious in such matters. His way of speaking, I'm afraid, exerts a bad influence upon the younger members. And we can hardly expect the world to respect religion, while they see—"

"Yes, ma'am, as you say, a lukewarm professor is the most dangerous enemy of the church."

"Exactly; and I'm afraid there are too many such now-a-days. There's Colonel Totling—I could hardly believe it, but they say he's given up family prayers. I really don't see, for my part, as such men are any better than Squire Moody, and twenty others, who make no pretensions to religion. Don't you think, Deacon Redwood, that it might

have some influence if you was to reason with them faithfully on this subject?"

"I have done so more than once; but it's of no use; the colonel hears all I have to say with the coldest indifference, and Squire Buckle either laughs it all off or flies into a passion."

"Perhaps," said Aunt Bethany, "you haint gone the right way to work; the squire, you know, is dreadful touchy and pertic'ler, and maybe don't like to be spoken to afore folks."

"It is hardly becoming in you, sister Bethany, to advise Deacon Redwood in such matters; he has probably done all for the best. And what if Squire Buckle is passionate, and doesn't like to be spoken to in the presence of others—that is the very reason he should learn humility, but no reason at all why we should shrink from performing what we know to be a duty."

There was no compromise about Aunt Rebecca. She scorned all conciliatory and half-way measures, in which she insisted the devil always got the advantage. She could not catch men with guile, nor become all things to all. She was always herself; her faith was rectangular; her rule of conduct straight and indivertible. She was never perplexed with doubts or misgivings, and was of course free from that weakness and vacillation of purpose that too often mar the most splendid talents. There was a completeness, a finish, about all her mental and moral habits, that gave her the most compact energy; and though it cannot be denied that her powers were contracted, it was from that very circumstance that they derived their extraordinary force.

After an hour spent in the above conversation, the deacon took his departure, highly satisfied at the result of his negotiation. He had not, however, so much reason to congratulate himself on his ingenuity as he supposed, for Aunt Rebecca had been for some time thinking of doing the very thing he had so cautiously suggested. Though it would not have been safe for any one else to have even hinted such a suspicion, her peace had been of late disturbed by an uneasy consciousness that, after all, she did not understand Philip's character quite so well as she supposed. There had been already several trials of strength between them: she had conquered,

it is true; but she could not help feeling that a few more such victories would prove her ruin. Philip had even gone so far on one occasion as to laugh in her face, and all her assumption of dignity having only made the matter worse, she had been compelled to save her credit by thrusting him into the closet. But as he was fast growing too old for such summary extinguishment, and there was no knowing how soon he might emancipate himself from her control altogether, the safest way was to get rid of him as soon as possible; and this last affair confirming her resolution, she wrote the same evening a letter to Mr. Hastings, politely requesting him to relieve herself and sister from the farther responsibility of his son's education.

The mail traveled slowly in those days, and it was more than a week before she received an answer. The family were at dinner when Aunt Rebecca informed Philip of his approaching departure. He was apparently very little affected by this announcement; but Mary no sooner found that Aunt Rebecca was in earnest, and that Philip was to leave her in a few days, perhaps forever, than she lost all appetite for her dinner, and sat looking alternately at him and Aunt Rebecca, the perfect picture of astonishment and dismay.

"Oh, Phil!" she cried, as soon as they were alone together, "how can you go away and leave me so, when you know there's nobody else in the world I love half so well as you."

"But you know I can't help it."

"Why, what's the reason Aunt Rebecca is going to send you away?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; I never heard a word about it till to-day."

"Perhaps you've been doing some thing or other she didn't like?"

"No, I havn't; not very lately, at any rate."

"Oh, Phil! don't you remember you've been fighting?"

"Well, 'spose I have—what of that?"

"Why, you know it's very wicked to fight."

"How do you know?"

"Why, don't you remember?—'Let dogs delight.'"

"Well, I couldn't help it, and I don't care. Philip Redwood is the ugliest fellow I ever saw."

"Well, I don't like him very well; and I don't think he's very polite, either."

"Why not?"

"Oh, he calls me Moll, and only last Sunday he said I was a minx."

"Minx! what's that?" said Philip, laughing slyly.

"I don't know exactly, but I'xpect he meant something about my new shoes."

"Well," returned Philip, still laughing, "if he called you minx, I'm very glad I gave him such a thrashing; but perhaps I'd better go now and give him another?"

"Oh, no! I don't mind it a bit, if he does call me names; but do you think you shall ever come back to Totemwell, after you go home?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; but I shouldn't wonder if I did, some o' these days."

Mary was now silent for several minutes; when all at once, with great animation, she exclaimed, "Oh, Phil! don't you want my doll to carry with you?"

"What! Angelina?"

"Yes!"

"Why, you don't mean that you'd give me Angelina?"

"Yes, I would, if you wanted her."

"Why, I thought you loved her better'n any thing else in the world."

"Well, so I do; but I'd rather you'd have her."

"I'm afraid she'd be homesick," said Philip, again laughing, but very gently, "if I should take her; for I shouldn't know how to take care of her very well; besides, you know, I'm going to college bimeby."

"Are you going to college?"

"Yes, soon as I'm old enough."

"Aint you 'fraid?"

"'Fraid! no! not a bit! What is there to be afraid of?"

"Oh, I don't know; but a college is such a dreadful place! I'm sure I should be frightened almost to death. But Phil, there's one thing I want to know—shall you ever think of me after you get home?"

"To be sure, I shall."

"How often?"

"'How often!' oh, I don't know: as oft once a week."

"Not oftener than that! why! I shall every day!"

"Well! you know you won't have so much besides, when I do think, I shall think ever tell you. And sometimes I shall take a whol do any thing else."

"Well! that 'll be real funny; but don't l it any more just now, for it makes me feel sc know what to do. But Phil, suppose any thin pen to you, if you should be sick, or any thing should I find it out?"

"Why! should you want to know?"

"Yes! to be sure I should."

"What for?"

"Oh! I should want to know, so as to be you were, and then I should want to pray for

"Pray for me! why! are you going to [illegible]

"Oh yes! every day."

"Well! let me think—oh! I know now, you remember that apple tree I set out in the garden two or three years ago."

"Yes."

"Well! after I'm gone, if you ever want to know how I'm getting along, you go and look at that tree; and if its tall and straight and handsome, you may be sure I'm well and happy; but if its crooked and stunted, then you may know that I'm sick or that something is the matter with me. And if it dies, you may be sure I am dead too."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Yes! to be sure I am; don't you remember that story I told you about the two brothers, and the knives they stuck into the tree so as to know how the other was getting along?"

"Yes! but I didn't suppose it was true."

"No! but this case is different; for this tree, you know, is my own; I planted it myself, and it would be strange enough if it wasn't sick and unhappy when I was. It would be the most ungrateful tree I ever saw."

"Let's go and look at it, and see how it looks now, and —"

"And bid it good bye! so let's! Oh! I begin to feel so sorry!"

The next morning, the same wagon in which Philip had first arrived in the village, rattled up to the door; the old horse-hair trunk, older than ever, was strapped on behind, very reluctantly Philip thought; but there was a mist before his eyes, and he could not see very clearly.

"Come in here a moment," said Aunt Rebecca, beckoning Philip into the front parlor, "I have a message to send to your father." She shut the door: the next moment he was folded in her embrace, and he felt a warm kiss upon his forehead. "Be a good boy Philip, and don't forget Aunt Rebecca! there!" and Aunt Rebecca walked out again into the entry, as cold and statuesque as ever. The rest of the family made their good-bye's so long that the driver grew impatient; but at last Philip tore himself away, and climbed into his seat: smack went the whip, round went the wheels, the boys, who had assembled to witness his departure, shouted their farewell; and in this triumphant sort our hero set out from Totemwell, leaving Aunt Rebecca framed sadly in the doorway where he had first seen her five long and happy years before.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF WHAT OCCURRED IN TOTEMWELL DURING THE SEVEN YEARS THAT FOLLOWED THE DEPARTURE OF OUR HERO.

As the pleasure-seeking traveler journeying through a country which he has never seen before, comes now and then to a place where two roads meet, and knowing not which to choose, wishes he could divide himself so as to see both at once, but finally takes the first that offers, determined, if he ever have an opportunity, to return and trace out the other also; so we, having reached a fork in our story, and seeing that the paths diverge so widely that we cannot possibly straddle from one to the other, are compelled to make the like difficult selection. The difficulty in our case, is all the greater from the unfortunate circumstance that whichever we choose, we find it necessary to separate from a part of our company, and to say good bye, either to our hero or to all the rest of our fellow travelers, who, henceforth journeying in different directions, will encounter diverse fortunes and adventures, all perhaps equally interesting and worthy a place in this impartial history. It may seem, indeed, as if but one course were open to us, and as if we were bound, without the least regard to our other associates, to accompany our hero in all his wanderings; like those good natured deities mentioned by the old writers, who seem to have had nothing else to do, than to follow all over the world the lucky mortal to whom they had taken a fancy, that they might be always on hand, to deliver him from those dangers into which, as if relying on their assistance, he was so constantly and needlessly plunging.

But we view the matter in a very different light; and having brought our hero thus far in safety, shall now leave him for a while to shift for himself; in order that he may acquire betimes that hardihood and self-reliance in which he

is so wofully deficient, and without which, all our friendly guidance and protection, would be in vain.

With this preamble we return to Mary, whom we left watching first the wagon, and, when that was no longer visible, the cloud of dust in which Philip was rapt from her sight. When at last, to use her own touching expression, "he was all gone," and when the unnatural strength communicated by the bustle of departure, and the necessity of action had given place to the weakness that usually follows such excitement, she went back into the house, that had never before looked so gloomy, and hiding her face in Aunt Bethany's lap, gave herself up to her first great sorrow.

And to be sure, it was astonishing how gloomy and desolate the old house seemed after Philip had left it, and how every article of furniture, from the magisterial, puritanic clock, to the little gossiping three-legged stool in the corner of the fire-place, seemed to sympathize in the general prostration. And who is there that has not seen the like? Let but a single member of a family be taken from it, and how disproportioned is the vacancy produced by his departure to the space he had really occupied! While he is with us, he is present but at a single point; but when he is gone, his absence haunts every place at once. In other words, he is negatively omnipresent. So Mary, hunting from chamber to chamber, from the house to the garden, and from the garden to the barn, missed Philip more and more at every step. Instead of losing a single Philip, she seemed to herself to have lost a hundred.

Aunt Bethany's placid face wore an expression of decided melancholy; more than once she dropped her knitting to give by her hands greater emphasis to the declaration, that really she'd no idea she'd ha' felt so bad—that she didn't know as she'd ever been so flustrated by any thing in her life, never at any rate since she lost her poor dear Joshua—and that really she was afraid she didn't feel quite so reconciled to it as she ought.

Aunt Rebecca hardly said a word the whole day, and was evidently in very ill humor; but she gave no other sign of feeling except once, when she snubbed Aunt Bethany for taking on so, as she called it, when she knew just as well as could be that it wouldn't do the least good. After dinner,

she sent Mary off to Squire Moody's, declaring that she couldn't bear to see such a long face any longer, and that she needn't come home till she was in a more sociable humor like other folks.

"Poor thing!" she said, "how she must miss him, to be sure! it 'll be dreadful lonely after she's gone, but it 'ill do her good, and I ought not to grudge her a little happiness; and then, it 'ill vex Bethany; yes! I'll let her go!"

Mary remained several days at Squire Moody's, where the change of scene and the society of the young people, acting on her elastic temper, gradually dispelled the melancholy occasioned by Philip's departure. The gap he had left behind him was soon grown over, and the little world of Totemwell continued to vegetate in its former sluggish tranquillity. For several years nothing occurred to interest the reader, except the marriage of Dr Edgerly and Margaret Bennett. It was with many misgivings that the doctor ventured on this important step. After long buffeting on the stormy sea of passion, he had at length, though with sails and tackle torn, found shelter in the quiet harbor of indifference; and he naturally shrank from exposing himself again to the chances of shipwreck.

Besides, Dr. Edgerly, though one of the most simple, minded of men, was not entirely free from the common weaknesses of humanity. He had actually lamented the loss of his first love with a keenness of sensibility known but to few. Unconsciously, he had affected to feel even more than he really did—he had made a sort of idol of his grief, entertained it with an excess of hospitality with his choicest meditations, and thus prevailed upon it to remain with him longer than it would have done if left to itself. He had even come to indulge a certain pride or vanity in his continued sorrow, and shrank from such an open disavowal of it as would be implied by a second engagement.

But all these feelings gradually wore off before the truly excellent qualities of Margaret. She was extremely affectionate, with a very humble sense of her own merits; and more than all, she loved him with all the devotedness he could desire. Her very deficiences were in her favor, since, by affording no room for rivalry between her and Fanny, they prevented that morbid jealousy which he would have

felt towards anyone who presumed to claim an equal share in his affections. Though nothing had ever been said on this subject, Margaret was fully aware of this peculiarity, and wisely, or rather I should say instinctively, abstained from every expression of that feeling which is the very soul of love—the feeling that nothing can stand between us and the beloved object, or cool the warmth of his affections by its cold shadow. She was content to know that her husband loved her far better than he was willing to allow; and she trusted to the effect of time to remove even this slight obstacle to their perfect union. One evening a few weeks after her first confinement, as they were sitting together in their neat little kitchen, or parlor, or parlor-kitchen, the doctor, who had been for some time in a brown study, suddenly exclaimed, "Well! my dear, seems to me it's about time for us to be thinking of a name for the little bit of Eve's flesh there in the corner. Poor thing! we've little else to give her; so it should be a good one. What do you say to Serafina?"

His wife was silent a moment, and then replied, hesitating, and with a conscious blush, "I've been thinking of the same thing, and I thought perhaps you'd like to have her called Fanny."

The doctor nodded three little nods at this, in token that he understood and appreciated her sensibility; and then with a look and tone that stirred her heart to the bottom, and made her blush still more deeply than before, exclaimed, "No! no! that will never do; the next one if it is a girl, shall be called Fanny; but my eldest daughter shall have the name of her mother. I am sure she can never find a better. Don't cry, my dear," he added, rising and bending over her, "you are my wife, first, last, only—I would not change you for any one on earth—no! nor in heaven." He kissed her again and again, then going to the cradle that she might have time to dry her tears, he stooped down and pretended to be busy in drawing the cover more carefully over the sleeping infant, that, though still sleeping soundly and unconscious, had just given its mother a pang of happiness that she thought repaid her a thousandfold for all she had suffered on its account.

Miss Lavinia, after her disappointment with Mr. Pease, turned her wishes towards Colonel Totling. She had stood

up with him at Margaret's wedding, and having made so auspicious a beginning, would probably have ended by standing up with him a second time, if China had not interfered. But on his first visit, Mrs. Buckle put into his hands the famous mug. He received it with profound veneration, and having peeped into the inside, as if it had been the identical well where truth drowned herself so many years ago, and having examined with microscopic vision, the place where the handle had been stuck on, and admired the ingenuity with which the several other fractures had been repaired, he was about to replace it on the mantle piece, when, unluckily, it slipped from his hands, and was dashed into twenty pieces on the floor.

"Well!" cried the colonel, "did you ever see such carelessness? I declare, I beg ten thousand pardons; but never mind, I'll get you another exactly like it, if I have to go to Boston on purpose!"

"Oh my soul and body!" cried Mrs. Buckle, holding up her hands, "if there isn't that mug smashed into a thousand pieces. An' what good do you suppose a new one 'll do me? Why! I wouldn't ha' had that broke for fifty mugs? An' after I've kep it so long! oh lordy! lordy!" and down she went on her knees, and commenced picking up the fragments, sighing like a furnace, and handling each as tenderly as if they had been the limbs of an only child.

If she had been less absorbed in this melancholy duty, she could hardly have failed to notice the colonel's exultation, which indeed he made little effort to conceal, and which would at once have shown her the perfidious cruelty of which he had been guilty.

He was so much pleased with the success of this innocent stratagem, that he kept laughing to himself, all the way home; and the next Sunday, happening in the very middle of the sermon, to turn his eye towards the pew occupied by Squire Buckle, he was suddenly seized with a violent fit of coughing, which lasted so long that it drew upon him the attention of the whole congregation, and at one time threatened fully to avenge Mrs. Buckle, for the irreparable injury she had suffered at his hands. The following Thursday, the colonel, dressed in his best, again presented himself

at the squire's; finally resolved to make an offer of his hand and heart, and all the appurtenances thereto belonging, to Miss Lavinia, to have and to hold the same in perpetual and undisputed possession; but hardly had he taken his seat, and exchanged the usual salutations, when Mrs. Buckle came bustling into the room, holding up before his astonished eyes, the very mug that he had last seen lying in fragments at his feet, and which he supposed was then utterly annihilated, beyond all possibility of redemption. As Macbeth started at sight of Banquo's blood-boltered ghost which would not down at his bidding; or as Satan in the garden knew his mounted sign aloft, and fled, and with him fled the shades of night, so started the colonel at the resurrection of the fatal china; he recognized the hand of fate and fled, and with him fled the hopes of Miss Lavinia.

On such insignificant trifles, hangs the fate of mortals; she had saved her mug, but lost her lover; and by making one of twenty pieces of crockery, she missed her chance of being made one with the colonel. Finding him obdurate in his resolution, she also dismissed all thoughts of matrimony; or, as she herself declared, became firmly and indissolubly wedded to the muses; though it is hard to see how that could be, as none of the whole number was ever supposed to be of the masculine gender, which is undoubtedly, the reason why women generally have met with such indifferent success in science and literature.

However, the fruits of this marriage were in no long time visible, in certain sonnets and similar scraps of poetry, of the sort usually denominated fugitive, that first appeared in a corner of a newspaper in an adjoining town. Very fugitive indeed they were, as the slave law so called, and at the same time scarcely able to go alone, being sadly troubled with the rickets, and otherwise in an ailing and weakly condition, so that it seemed impossible that they should survive a twelvemonth; yet Miss Lavinia, or as we should now say, Mrs. Lavinia, regarded these puny and deformed nurslings with as much maternal pride and affection as if they had been the minions of their race; a truly admirable provision of nature which has thus preserved and given to the world many a full-grown and well-proportioned poem, romance, history, or what-not, which would otherwise have

perished in its infancy, and been forever lost to the critics and the rest of mankind.

Still more curious and gratifying was it to see the fondness of the doting grandmother. In the bottom of her work-basket, among spools of thread, balls of silk and yarn and tape and worsted, and a host of kindred articles, Mrs. Buckle constantly carried, wherever she went, one or more of her daughter's effusions, which she read on an average three times a day, and admired all the more because she could not understand them. But no one else was equal to such an undertaking; and Mrs. Lavinia, after writing vigorously for several months, without producing a sensation, had begun to despair, when fortunately falling into the hands of a sturdy little critic of those parts, he did so maul and belabor her that nothing except a rhinoceros, as it seemed, could possibly have survived it. It was the very making, however, of Mrs. Lavinia, who thereupon, like a true woman and a genius, took heart of grace and began to write more vehemently than ever, magnanimously declaring that she cared not a snap for the applause of the present generation, but threw herself confidently on the justice of posterity. This is undoubtedly a very proper proceeding in such cases; but the worst of it is that posterity will, according to all appearances, have such a numerous family of its own to look after that it will never think of adopting half, no, nor a quarter of the bantlings thus laid at its door.

Well would it have been for Mrs. Lavinia if she had been content with this vindication of her powers, and instead of venturing into the stormy field of political controversy, had remained snugly ensconced in the poet's corner of the literary fireside, nursing its flame and courting the sweet oblivious muse. It was in an evil hour for her peace of mind that she first conceived the idea of becoming a managing woman, and of setting up an opposition to Miss Rebecca. Now, Miss Rebecca ruled the roast in Totemwell with as despotic a sway as the great Earl of Chatham ever exercised in the English House of Commons, or Peter the Headstrong in the councils of New Amsterdam. As in both those cases, this was not so much owing to her superior intellectual endowments as to that moral hardihood and intrepidity that exults in danger and sweeps away all obstacles like cobwebs

from the mouth of a cannon. Strife and contention were her congenial elements, and the smoke of battle was the very breath of her nostrils. Long enjoyment of arbitrary power had, as usual, confirmed this temper, and given her a sort of prescriptive right to all its royal prerogatives. For thirty years she had been President of The Ladies' Sewing Circle; and during all that time the deliberations of that important body had been marked by an unanimity to which history furnishes not a single parallel. When first elevated to this exalted station, Miss Rebecca had displayed the most extraordinary moderation, and had even had so much regard for the established forms of government, on several occasions, as to put the question to vote whenever there was nothing of any consequence to be determined. But she no sooner got the reins firmly in her own hands, than she at once threw off the mask; the constitution became a dead letter; and thus, what had been originally a limited, elective monarchy was changed into an Eastern despotism.

This was the state of affairs when Mrs. Lavinia, more worthy than Portia to have been the wife of Brutus, actuated by the same noble motive that has impelled so many kindred spirits to die for their country, determined single-handed to rise against the tyrant, and free her native village from the disgraceful bondage under which it had so long labored. A few days after she had come to this resolution, the ladies of Totemwell being then all assembled in secret and solemn conclave, to deliberate on the momentous question whether they should present their new minister with a coat or cloak, and the deliberation having, as usual, begun and ended with Aunt Rebecca, who had decided in favor of the coat, the infatuated Lavinia rose from her seat, and, to the unutterable horror and amazement of the whole sisterhood, delivered a long and forcible harangue in support of the more classic garment. She was at length, however, so utterly disconcerted by the contemptuous air of Aunt Rebecca, that she was compelled to sit down, leaving her speech unfinished, and having omitted several very important particulars; whereupon Aunt Rebecca, perceiving her wretched condition, inquired, with an air of the loftiest magnanimity and condescension, whether she had any thing more to offer, and learning that she had not, announced that they would now proceed to business, rubbing

her hands, and looking round upon the whole circle, like Jove among the Olympian deities, after giving them one of those uncomfortable snubbings to which, if Homer knew as much as he pretended, he was so strongly addicted.

This was a terrible blow to Mrs. Lavinia, and it was a long time before she recovered from her disgrace. She absented herself from several successive meetings, on the plea of indisposition, and even thought of withdrawing altogether from the connection; but her resolution was not quite equal to such an effort. On the other hand, Aunt Rebecca, acting on the well-known principle, that a government is never so strong as after having crushed a dangerous rebellion, became more imperious than ever, and carried her usurpations to such an extent that no one dared to cut out a shirt, or set up a stocking, without first receiving special orders to that purpose.

Little Mary Wallace was now fast ripening into a beautiful woman. Farmer Moody affected the utmost surprise, every time they met, to see how much she had grown. It made him feel as if he were really an old man.

"My little tricksey-wicksey," he exclaimed, with a melancholy shake of the head, "has blown away, and there is nothing but this great awkward thing come in its place. I used to know a little Mary, that would sit in my lap and put her arms round my neck; but I haven't seen her this ever so long, and I can't think what has become of her."

"Well, uncle!" cried Mary, laughing, "I will sit in your lap, and put my arms around your neck, as much as you want me to; but I can't help growing old, and big, and awkward. I'm sure I wish I could, if it worries you so; I'd rather be your little totsey-wotsey than all the grown-up women in the world; but I suppose I must grow up some time or other;" and Mary sighed, as if she were threatened with some dreadful calamity.

But, as she said, she couldn't help it. Time, that stole the miniature grace of childhood, every day supplied its place with some fresh attraction on a larger scale, till, in her seventeenth year, it seemed that nothing more could be added to her charms. Not by any means that she was a perfect beauty—far from it. Miss Lavinia, who was herself inclining to tall, said she was too short. Bessy Dowd, who

called herself stout, and whom her friends called dumpy, said she was too tall. Tibby Gaskins thought her nose too straight; and even Susy Moody, Mary's chief friend and confidante, allowed that she wouldn't look any worse if her hair had been a shade or two lighter. Furthermore, Miss Hannah Maria Coolbroth, the daughter of a wealthy grocer in Boston, declared that Miss Wallace was certainly very pretty, but she wanted style.

"We don't think anything, you know, now-a-days of mere good looks," cried Miss Hannah Maria; "all we care for in the city is whether one is stylish or not."

Now, it can not be denied that Mary was sadly deficient in style—at any rate, the style of Miss Hannah Maria. Miss Hannah Maria's style was made up of a high forehead, agreeably diversified with freckles, a very decided nose and chin,—too decided for a woman,—a neck which ill-natured persons pronounced scraggy, and a figure somewhat too suggestive of chalk and slate-pencils. All the young ladies in the village whose style corresponded to this description, were mightily pleased with Miss Hannah Maria's observation, and said they thought so too; while, on the other hand, all who had any pretensions to beauty fought against this dangerous heresy with wonderful unanimity. The young men were almost all on this side of the question; and Tom Harris, the wit of the village, declared, referring to Miss Hannah Maria, that if that was style, the less style they had the better!

The graces of Mary's mind equaled those of her person. They were in almost the same degree the gifts of nature, and consequently quite as destitute of style. She possessed nothing that could be called an accomplishment. She could neither draw, nor paint, nor dance, nor play on the piano. She sang, to be sure, not divinely, nor like a singing-master, but like a bird in its native woods. She knew not a word of Greek, or Latin, or French, or German. She had never studied Hedge's Logic, nor Watts on the Mind, nor any intellectual or moral philosophy whatever. She had never been blessed with a Young Lady's Friend, nor with The Daughter's Companion, nor Hints for Forming the Character, nor, in short, any of those ingenious contrivances by which modern authors, more considerate than Dr.

Johnson, undertake to supply their readers not only with an understanding, but with wit, taste, manners, morals, and religion into the bargain.

But as if all this was not enough to make her a perfect heathen, Mary had never read Shakespeare, nor Milton, nor Scott's Novels, nor Byron, nor The Sketch Book, nor The Last of the Mohicans; worse and worse! nor was she very fond of reading, at least not in the mad way that Philip was, who read, in fact, all over, and sucked in the story as if it had been an oyster. But she had read Robinson Crusoe before Philip went away, and that was a mine by itself; and she had read The Lady of the Lake, and Peter Parley's History of the American Revolution, and the second volume of Cooper's Pilot, and Popular Lessons, and the Young Reader, and The Life of Captain John Smith, and perhaps half a dozen others. Thus it will be seen her reading was not very extensive, but it must not be supposed from this that she was either idle or ignorant. She knew every flower in the garden, and every tree in the woods; Aunt Rebecca owned her skill in handling the spit and the needle; and even Miss Hannah Maria Coolbroth confessed to herself, with despairing envy, that the stupid country girl dressed with a taste she could not attain. To be sure she could not, for it was of the nature of genius, intuitive, and not to be sought by rules. This same taste, or tact, or grace, whatever it may be called, was a kind of glory over Mary, a luminous cloud, so that everything she did or said seemed "virtuousest, wisest, discreetest, best." Without it, the perfect regularity of her features and amiability of her temper might have been insipid—folks would have found out that she wanted character, that she had no mind of her own, in fact, that she was no better than a doll. Indeed, this combination of qualities is so rare that it is almost regarded as impossible. Amiability, by which I understand a universal complacency, is only another name for weakness or affectation. It implies either an intellectual or moral deficiency, false heart or false head. Whoever loves everybody loves nobody. A man must hate at least half the world, to prove that he loves the other half. Like the poet's oak, just as far as his love towers upward to heaven, so far must his hate strike downward to hell. If he hate all the world but one, so much the

better for that one; as, if the sun shine on all the world alike, each spot receives but a few rays, but if he shine on one alone, what blazing heat is there!

But this theory is an insult to human nature. As if we must purchase every pound of love with a pound of hate! As if we could prove our good qualities only by negatives! or, as if a thief should undertake to show his honesty by the great number of those he had robbed! In the name of humanity! I would ask, are man's affections to be measured like cloth or potatoes? Can they be drained dry, like a barrel of cider at a militia muster? Is there only enough for so many? or are they rather a perennial fountain, a Fortunatus's purse, a widow's cruse—often emptied yet never empty, not too much for one yet enough for all?"

After this burst of virtuous indignation,—after having thrown this one stone at the enemy, I feel free to confess, that I am here arguing against my own conscience. I agree with the world in this matter. I want no man's love who loves my neighbor. I can't bear to be crowded, either in my friend's house or heart; if he keeps open table, I humbly take my leave.

Mary longed to be loved; so did Philip; but this very longing, mingling with his pride, stirred up a terrible effervescence, so that his love often took the form of indifference, and sometimes a yet more questionable shape. His love was awkward, uncouth, misshapen—a bitter sweet—a kiss followed by a blow—July's heart and December's hand; Mary's was graceful and unconstrained, without concealment or disguise—where she loved, she was not ashamed to show it, and where she showed it, she was sure to be believed.

This contrast was in part owing to a diversity in their characters, already noticed. Mary was conscious in what we may call the first degree; she was conscious of her beauty, and of her popularity, but not conscious of this consciousness; there was no duplicity about her—no second self overlooking the first, impertinently prying into and criticizing all her words and actions. Philip's consciousness was like an onion, coat within coat; or rather, it was like two opposing mirrors, that forever reflect and multiply the same image, throwing it back and forth like a shuttlecock. He could seldom forget himself sufficiently to be entirely at

his ease in the presence of others; he was embarrassed by their observation; and thus, between his anxiety to gain their good opinion, and his own restive pride, he exhibited a strange compound of the most servile fear and the most rugged independence. This morbid consciousness, the fruitful parent of jealousy and doubt, the enemy to true naturalness and simplicity, is a fatal gift to the happiness of its possessor. It puts one out of conceit with himself as much as if he saw, with his bodily eyes, all the wondrous alchemy of the life within him—all the internal economy of that curious and complicated machine he calls himself.

When the Grecian generals, in the war with Persia, cast votes to determine which of their number should be entrusted with the chief command, each one wrote himself first, and Themistocles second. Themistocles, therefore, obtained the office. So, if the young ladies of Totemwell had been called to decide who among them deserved the prize of beauty, each would have placed Mary, without hesitation, next to herself. From this we may conclude that Mary, in spite of the numerous and important blemishes already mentioned, was yet the prettiest girl in the village. If I might venture to give my own opinion in so delicate a matter, I should have no hesitation in saying that I thought her then the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. I never saw her without being reminded of Shakespeare's Viola; and, to tell the truth, she would have made the most charming boy in the world. The rich color of the south mantled in her cheeks; and the transparent bloom of her complexion, if not quite as delicate as is sometimes seen in her fairer sisters, was far more permanent, and, to my mind at least, far more alluring. The open bodice in which she delighted, was especially adapted to her style of beauty; and when I saw her with her sun-bonnet thrown back on her shoulders, tripping along the forest paths, she seemed to me as pretty a fairy as ever "ran on greensward." It was impossible that so much beauty should want admirers, especially when allied with so many more substantial qualities; and Mary soon began to experience all the cares and difficulties that beset one in her situation. Among those young men who already cast longing looks on the reigning belle, Peter Redwood was generally conceded to have the fairest chance of winning the

prize. He was now about twenty years of age, of an unusually handsome person; and his father was said to be the richest man in town. With all these advantages, it would have been mere mock-modesty in Peter to doubt for a moment of his success, wherever he might choose to pay his addresses; and, in fact, all his rivals tacitly acknowledged his supremacy by one after another retiring from the field. Thus encouraged, Peter's heart swelled within him at the thought of his approaching triumph; and he came very near putting Mary to the question as they were returning together from an evening meeting, but finally determined to wait a while longer, just as a cat forbears to eat the mouse she dandles in her paws, not because he had any doubt of his acceptance, but because it is so pleasant to dally with a pleasure which we feel confident can be enjoyed at any moment.

"Accept him! to be sure she will!" cried Mrs. Redwood; "I'll warrant she knows which side her bread's buttered; but I'll tell you one thing beforehand—she's a mighty extravagant huzzy; you'll have a hard row to hoe, if you let her have her own way. You must mind and drive with a tight rein, and not give her too many oats."

"Hold her in, eh! and let her trot?" returned Peter, facetiously; "you can let me alone for that! I believe I know a thing or two."

The deacon was not quite so sanguine. He said nothing, indeed, to his wife or son; but that evening, after he had returned home, he began to think the matter over at greater length than he had ever done before. "If he only had a little more sense," he said to himself, "I think his chance would be a good one; but, as it is, I am somewhat doubtful. Strange, that *my* son should be such a fool! And yet he's not a fool either; in all business matters he has shrewdness enough; but when it comes to talking—if one could only make love in the way of trade—reduce the whole thing to a question of dollars and cents—work it up in the ledger, so much to cash, so much to Mary Wallace, and so much to profit and loss. Well! she'd come to a pretty figure! Not a bad speculation, any way! Pity one can't come across one every day!"

"But will she have him? that's the question. 'Ques-

tion!' no question at all; she must have him. Now, I can't bear the sight of her. One look at her simple, innocent face, takes hold o' me worse than all parson Merrill's preaching. But how is it to be? Never mind! there's time enough yet. I'll find some way to bring her round; and if not—then! what then? why, then it's her fault, not mine. I'm sure I am doing all I can to promote her happiness, and if she won't let me, how am I to blame? Would not Peter make her a good husband? and isn't a good husband a good thing, I want to know? I am sure I have none but the kindest feelings towards her."

The family had long been gone to bed, and it was now "the very witching time of night;" but still the deacon sat there in deep thought. The fire burned low, and then a stick suddenly breaking in the middle, one of the brands rolled out on to the hearth. The smoke presently awoke him from his reverie, and starting up, he looked around with the air of a man who has been thinking of some secret wickedness, and is afraid lest others should, by some unknown sense, detect the subject of his meditations. Once or twice, while arranging the fire for the night, he again looked behind him with the same conscious apprehension. The lamp burned dim and ghastly. The darkness that streamed in at the uncurtained windows, seemed about to drown the feeble light. The little circle illumined by its rays grew smaller and smaller, as if yielding to an increasing pressure. The shadows mustered thickly in the corners, and gathered blackness every moment. The deacon was glad to retreat, and leave them in undisputed possession. For several hours after he retired to bed, he continued to study the same difficult question, and towards morning fell into an uneasy slumber.

CHAPTER XV.

PETER REDWOOD'S COURTSHIP.

THE next day, when they were alone in the store, the deacon called his son, and first looking carefully around, to be sure that no one was in hearing, he gave him the result of his evening's meditations.

"I've been thinking over that matter," he began, "of your marriage with Mary Wallace, and have come to the conclusion that it's not so clear as we supposed."

Here he paused, as if expecting Peter to make some reply; but Peter knew better, and the deacon went on, addressing himself altogether to the stove funnel, which listened with becoming gravity and attention. "Your mother, I know, thinks the thing as good as settled, and that you've only to open your mouth for the plum to fall in; and so perhaps it will, when it's ripe enough; but we musn't hurry matters. Love is like war; it very often happens that more is gained by standing still than by the hardest fighting. There are many things time can do for us better than we can do them ourselves; and whenever he's willing to work, we must be idiots not to let him."

"Now, the difficulty is just here: you have youth, good looks, money, and, I may say, a fair share of intelligence—enough to satisfy almost any woman; you've got rid of your most dangerous rival, before he was old enough to do any harm; and I really don't think there's anyone now in the village that need give you a moment's uneasiness. So far, every thing is just as we would have it; and, if Mary Wallace were like most other women, you might marry her in a month. It's really a pity she's so much sense—half as much would be enough for her—in fact, quite as much as a woman ought to have; and then you'd stand a much better chance. But as I was saying, you've money and good looks, a plenty; most girls wouldn't ask any thing else;

but, unless I am entirely mistaken, this Mary Wallace is made of different stuff; not that she'd object to this sort o' thing at all, but there are others she'd think (I don't say wisely or unwisely) that she couldn't do without, and those I'm afraid you havn't got. It's true, she's had no great of an education herself, but she can appreciate the advantages of it well enough in another; and it won't take her an hour to find out—if, indeed, she doesn't know it already—that your conversation is neither very brilliant nor very refined. You would do very well, I dare say, on pork and flour; but I see no way, just now, in which they could be introduced to advantage on such an occasion."

"Why, there's Colonel Totling—he's never had any education, and he can talk as fast as anybody."

"Yes, and to as little purpose; but Colonel Totling is a very smart man; and you—are not a fool, by any means, but it's very clear that you were never cut out for an orator. No! if you win Mary Wallace, it must be by other means than through your wit or eloquence; and fortunately, such ways are not wanting; it's our business to make the best of them. In the first place, then, I trust you've altogether too much sense to suppose that what is commonly called love has any thing to do with the matter. If you choose to fall in love yourself, why, so much the better—love's folly is wiser than wisdom; but you must not expect Mary to follow your example. It is enough if you succeed in rendering yourself necessary to her happiness or her convenience; and this you can do in a thousand ways,—by being as often as possible in her society; by rendering her all those little attentions that a gentleman has it always in his power to bestow upon a lady; and, most of all, by flattering her vanity. This rule is the surest, and at the same time the easiest in its application; for, much as women differ in other respects, they all agree in this, that vanity is nine-tenths of their composition. In this way, and with now and then a present judiciously thrown in, not very costly, but tasteful and yet showy—that is, something they can make a parade of—any woman may be won in time. Mind, I don't say in a week, or a month, but in time; some, indeed, are ours at once; but it is safer to calculate upon a pretty long siege, especially when, as in your case, there is no rival to interfere. So she will come

at length to regard you as a part of herself—something that she cannot part from without inconvenience; and then—why then, all you have to do is to step in boldly and make your proposition in due form. Well! well! she's a prize worth fighting for, I declare!" said the deacon, warming up a little, and rubbing his hands with sudden animation, greatly to Peter's amazement; "I wish I was young myself; you don't know half her value; you'll say so yourself some o' these days;" and the deacon smiled archly to himself, then winced and frowned as if he had felt a twinge of the gout.

"Well, as I was saying, all this requires time; but there is another way by which we may contrive to hasten matters a little. Aunt Rebecca, I am sure, will be delighted at the match, or at least after I've talked it over with her; and if she once makes up her mind that it shall be! But, remember, slow and sure."

That very evening Peter determined to commence operations. Having spent half an hour in contemplating his image in the glass, to their mutual satisfaction, he boldly presented himself in the little sitting-room to which we introduced the reader several years ago. It was considerably changed in appearance since Mary had taken charge of its arrangement. The floor was covered with a carpet; there were several books, with handsome bindings, lying on the table; and other indications, too plain to be mistaken, that the severity of Aunt Rebecca's reign was broken. In fact, Aunt Rebecca was no longer mistress in the house where she had so long exercised despotic sway. Mary had stolen from her one prerogative after another, till nothing remained but the shadow of her former dignity. She was compelled to look on while innovations she would once have resisted to the utmost were made in the household economy. Besides the specific changes already mentioned, there was another not so easily described, but which made itself felt the moment one entered the house. By some witchery or other, Mary had contrived to bring all around her into perfect sympathy with her own temper. The old clock, formerly so stiff and unbending, had softened its rugged features into a smile, and all its allies, in imitation of that time-honored example, had also disowned allegiance to their late mistress;

so that the room was now become one of the most cheerful in the village.

No one felt greater satisfaction at this revolution, than Aunt Bethany. She was once more at liberty to express her own feelings in her own way, without fear of Aunt Rebecca's coming down upon her with that indignation which such strong-minded individuals naturally feel for all who are less strong-minded than themselves. Relieved from this perpetual bug-bear, her mind and heart gradually expanded, and discovered a depth and richness for which no one had ever given her credit; and, as if to make amends for her past privation, she now simpered, talked, and chuckled all day long.

Even Aunt Rebecca could not escape the softening influences of youth and grace and beauty. Though she held out manfully to the last, and seemed to find a secret satisfaction in ridiculing and opposing the new order of things, she was really pleased at her defeat. She was glad to be relieved from the burden of her dignity. She resembled an old crusader, compelled by age and infirmity to lay aside the armor he had worn so lightly in his youth. She had for some time anxiously sought for an opportunity of surrendering up the authority she had maintained with such honorable success, into younger and more vigorous hands. Even her iron frame could not last forever. She loved now to sit in her comfortable arm-chair on her side of the fire, while Aunt Bethany sat opposite, and watch Mary's light and airy figure, as she passed back and forth in the performance of her household duties. In this department, Mary displayed such rapidity of execution, and such minuteness and perfection of detail, as called forth Aunt Rebecca's highest admiration. She did not fail to appropriate to herself a full share of credit on this account, attributing Mary's marvelous facility in all household matters entirely to her own instructions. But really Mary owed much more to nature than to art. She had seized and comprehended by the inspiration of genius what Aunt Rebecca had attained only by imitation. Aunt Rebecca, however, did not recognize this distinction; she seemed to look upon Mary as an offshoot of her own mind, as a perfect copy of what she herself had been in her younger days, though in reality she had not

changed in any particular since she was sixteen. Time had perhaps indurated her habits, as it had stiffened her joints; but her character, like her figure, was the same as ever. It was only within the last few years, that any one could detect the least symptom of yielding or relaxation; and even now, on any important occasion, her lofty spirit abated not a jot of its former supremacy.

When Peter entered the room, he found the two sisters in their usual position, Aunt Bethany the very picture of placid contentment, and Aunt Rebecca, rather uneasily rocking herself in her low-backed, yellow rocking-chair—a chair that, either from the original conformation of its rockers or from extreme old age, or from long habit, could only move in a sharp, jolting trot, just as a horse that has been ridden all his life by the same rider (I am afraid that after all, my horse will turn out a bull), can never alter his gait to suit his new owner. It was rather an awkward situation for a bashful wooer; for Aunt Rebecca, on perceiving a visitor, immediately banished the air of weariness she had worn before, and now sat upright, with even more than her wonted dignity.

He was somewhat reassured, however, by the smirking affability of Aunt Bethany; and prudently taking his seat on her side of the fire, he began to warm his hands and feet with the most commendable ardor and perseverance. Mary resumed her sewing, and waited modestly for some one to begin the conversation. Peter thought he would give a dollar to know what she was thinking of, and several times directed inquisitive glances at her downcast face; but all his skill in physiognomy failed to satisfy his curiosity. He accordingly threw his right leg over his left knee, thrust his hands into his pockets, and settling down an inch in his chair, observed, in a sort of a general way, that a fire was a *mighty* comfortable thing.

"So it is, I declare!" cried Aunt Bethany, in her good-natured desire to promote the conversation taking this remark at far more than its actual value.

"Of a cold night," said Peter.

"Yes! of a cold night," said Aunt Bethany.

"'Taint bad either of a cold frosty morning, with the thermometer down to zero, and the wind blowing like Jerusalem," said Peter.

"No! I guess 'tisn't," said Aunt Bethany, with a knowing air.

"Father's been at me a long time," said Peter, "to get me to make the fire over at our house, but I was rather too much for him there. I'd be so sound asleep, you see, when he came to wake me, and he'd be so long about it, that at last he thought 'twould be less trouble to make it himself; so now I never think o' stirring till breakfast's about ready. Father's generally pretty 'cute, and no mistake; but it takes considerable to get round me."

"Why! you don't let your father make the fire, do you?" said Aunt Bethany.

"Oh! he don't mind it, he'd as lief do it as not; and I believe the cold takes hold o' me worse than it does other people," replied Peter; and then, to testify his perfect ease and self-possession, he reversed the order of his legs, and settled gradually down, till his ears were just on a level with the back of the chair—a position eminently favorable for studying astronomy out of doors, or fly-and-spider-nomy within, but not particularly remarkable for grace or dignity. So Mary could not help thinking, as her eye followed his tall figure, rising in a regular slope from his toes to his chin; and she wondered how anyone could dare to assume such an attitude in the presence of Aunt Rebecca. While she wondered, Peter made a sort of spasmodic effort, something like the jerk of a jack-knife, without taking his hands from his pockets, and regained his upright position.

"I never could learn to sit still of an evening," he exclaimed with a yawn, as if doubtful whether his manners did not require some apology—"if I do, I'm sure to drop off into a snooze directly. I vum, I don't see how you girls manage to keep awake as you do, with that everlasting stitch, stitch, stitch."

"Perhaps if you had something to do, you would keep awake the easier," said Mary.

"No! I shouldn't," returned Peter in an intensely facetious manner, "I know, you see, 'cause I've tried it. Father wants me sometimes to do something or other—make out an account, or something o' that sort; but I always make a point of going to sleep, and then he has it to do himself, you know. No! you don't catch me doing any thing when I can help it."

"Well! for my part," cried Mary, "I always like to have something to do. I dare say you'll laugh at me; but I can think a hundred times better for having some plain sewing or knitting to do at the same time."

"Can you though?" said Peter; "well! I shouldn't wonder, for women ain't a bit like men in those matters."

"No!" said Mary, "I don't suppose they are. Now there's Dr. Edgerly will sit for hours together looking at the fire, and I believe he enjoys it better than any thing in the world. When I laugh at him for being so stupid, he always says it's because I have no more imagination that I don't enjoy it as much as he does; and that, if I ever go to Italy, I shall be sure to be burned as a heretic, if I don't learn to think better of their '*dolce far niente*,' if you know what that means."

"Yes! I think I've heard the name before; it's a kind of hair-dye, or something of that sort, isn't it?"

"No, indeed! What shocking ignorance! It's fortunate there's one learned person in the house! but I desire to enlighten you as soon as possible. The sun, you know, always shines in Italy."

"Yes!" said Peter.

"And they live on sunshine, almost like grasshoppers, with now and then a grape or an olive, you know, just by way of variety."

"Yes," said Peter, as if he knew all about it.

"So they don't have to work at all, but they sit in the shade and look at the sun, and dream, and build castles in the air; and they call it the '*dolce far niente*,' or sweet do nothing."

"Italy would be just the country for me, if that's the case; it just suits my notions exactly," cried Peter, commencing his settling down process a second time. He was really getting on famously. He thought he had never talked so well in his life, and only wished his father was there to hear him. If Colonel Totling could do any better than that he would just like to have him try, that was all. From this state of self-complacency he was at once aroused by Aunt Rebecca, who had hitherto taken no farther part in the conversation than by rocking with increased energy whenever any thing was said that did not meet with her approbation; but now exclaimed, shaking up all her faculties, like a

feather bed that hadn't been made for a month, or rather like a dose of physic, "Why, Peter Redwood! such a father as you've got, and such a mother, to talk in that way! Don't you remember what Solomon says: 'For Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.' It does very well for those ignorant, superstitious Catholics to be idle; we can't expect any thing better from them. When I think that here, in Protestant New England, where we have the Bible and other privileges in which we are more highly privileged than any other people, and a sense of our superior advantages we are left entirely without excuse. But I really do hope you won't think of following after Dr. Edgerly, for he has spent so much time in those dens of wickedness that I sometimes fear he isn't much better himself; so the less you all have to say to him the better."

"Never fear, Aunty!" cried Mary, goodnaturedly coming to Peter's assistance; "I shan't so easily forget your instructions; besides, it's more natural to me to work than to be idle; but as to Dr. Edgerly, I never thought of it before, but I'm afraid he *is* a little bit tainted with heresy. He has a crucifix hanging up over his chimney, and the other day Mrs. Edgerly told me they were going to have frogs for dinner, and invited me to stay and see how good they were. And she was going to send some over to you, but I told her they would only be wasted."

"You did perfectly right, my dear, and I am glad to see that you have so much principle and resolution; not that I consider eating frogs, as some would do, a vital sin. I have too much candor and liberality for that; but when one once begins to go astray, there is no knowing when they will stop."

"But didn't you have any curiosity to try a mouthful, just to see how they tasted," said Aunt Bethany.

"Why yes, I did taste a little bit, just to please Mrs. Edgerly."

"And what did it taste like?"

"It tasted very good," replied Mary, in a tone of the most charming penitence that can be imagined; "quite as good, I dare say, as the forbidden fruit; but really, Aunty! you can't think how sorry I am; but I will never do so again, I assure you; not if the frog should go down on his knees himself to ask me."

Peter, looking at her while she spoke, had a kind of feeling—he didn't know exactly what—that if he were a frog, there was nothing in the world, except a mud-puddle, he should love half so well!

"I swow, Mary!" he exclaimed, by a very natural transition, "you look good enough to eat!"

"Well!" gasped Aunt Rebecca, thinking it now time to recover from her astonishment, "I never did! no! nor nobody never did! nor never will!"

If any one wishes to know what it was that Aunt Rebecca never did, and that nobody ever did, nor ever will, I am sorry that I cannot inform him. All we can conjecture is, that it must have been something very dreadful indeed; inasmuch as Aunt Rebecca never made use of this adjuration, except when she was laboring under intense excitement, and wished to express the highest superlative of wonder, horror, or indignation.

"I am very sorry!" said Mary, folding her hands, and looking more and more humble every moment.

"To think that one of my family, and one that has grown up under my care, should have forgotten herself so far as to conform to—to—as to do such a thing as that. But mind! I can make allowance; I wouldn't have you to suppose that I see no difference between this and—and breaking the seventh commandment, for instance; I'm not so blinded by bigotry and prejudice as to advance any such doctrine as that; I see perfectly how to discriminate between them; but for all that, it was a very great error, my dear, and shows, I must say, a looseness of principle, and a hankering after the lusts of the world, that I can hardly understand you."

"What would you say to eating rats and mice, as they do in China?"

"What would I say; I say—and if they were the very last words I had to utter, I'd say the same thing—that we ought to be very thankful we live in a land where such abominations are not practiced; though perhaps Dr. Edgerly eats them too!"

"No! I hardly think he has got to be so bad as that, though I have heard him say that if he had remained in China long enough, he might have acquired quite a partiality for their style of cooking."

"I don't doubt it in the least; in fact that only confirms what I have all along thought of his utter want of any fixed moral and religious principle. I don't know how it is, but the church has never seemed to flourish since Dr. Edgerly came to Totemwell. I thought how it would be then, and I told sister Bethany, that now we'd got a new doctor and one that had lived so long in popish countries, I was afraid corruption would creep in among us. And then he married Margaret Bennet, and her father, good old Parson Bennet, that always used to be so particular about his church members, admitted him without saying a word, though there was that horrid story about that French girl, and I don't know how many others."

"You were not old enough," she continued, turning to Peter, "to know much about it, but I remember your father, who always spoke right out, was decided as could be against it. He said he could not conscientiously consider a man a Christian who didn't pay his just debts; and Dr. Edgerly, it seems, owed him a large sum, I believe as much as a hundred dollars. The doctor had been unfortunate, so somebody said, and would pay the money as soon as he could; but the deacon—I remember his very words—he said nobody had any right to be unfortunate, and that for his part he thought misfortune a sort of dishonesty, and—

"It's very easy," cried Mary, "for him to say so; for he has never known what it is to be unfortunate; but it's a shame for anybody to say that Dr. Edgerly isn't honest, and just because he couldn't pay that ugly note the very day and hour it was due. It wasn't for himself either (I know, for Mrs. Edgerly told me all about it); but it was to help poor old Mrs. Tafts. And Mrs. Tafts told me the same thing; and she said that if it hadn't been for Dr. Edgerly, she should have been in the work-house long before now."

"But father couldn't help that, you know," said Peter with a politic softness of voice a wolf might envy; "a man has no right to give a note without he's able to pay it; and folks can't expect us to wait forever for our money, 'cause they're fools enough to go security for other folks. But you women don't understand such matters; and Dr. Edgerly ain't much better; he's the greatest simpleton I know of."

"I don't pretend to know much about such matters,"

replied Mary, "and I should be very sorry to know any more, if I thought it would make me call generosity folly, or think that Dr. Edgerly wasn't an honest man."

"I didn't say he wasn't an honest man; all I say is that he don't know no more about business than a woodchuck; and as for making a bargain, I could beat him at that when I wasn't mor'n ten years old."

"He may not make good bargains for himself," said Mary, "but I am sure nobody could make better bargains for other people."

"I think it's likely; but that's a kind o' bargaining I don't know much about myself. The fact is, I don't like Dr. Edgerly over and above well; he's too good an opinion of himself altogether, to suit my notions."

As Mary, for some reason or other, made no reply to this remark, the conversation now took another start; and at nine o'clock Peter took leave of the ladies, highly elated at the issue of his first experiment.

CHAPTER XVI.

DEACON REDWOOD PLAYS A GAME OF CHESS WITH AUNT REBECCA.

THE next morning, when his father inquired how he sped in his wooing, Peter assured him that he had no doubt Mary knew just as well as could be what he was after, and had given him all the encouragement he could ask.

"Aunt Rebecca," he added, "was rather stiff and pokerish at first, and at one time I thought she was going to come down on me like a thousand of brick; but before we got through she was as cosy and chatty as a kitten. And we talked about Italy, and China, and the magnetic telegraph, and all sorts o' things; and I done first-rate! Fact! I never knew before I *could* talk so well. I said one or two things that was real witty, and no mistake—I don't remember 'em now exactly, but you'd 'a said so too, if you'd only heard 'em. I didn't think much of 'em myself to be sure, but I could see by the way that Mary's eyes twinkled that she thought they were first-rate."

"Phew!" said the deacon, elevating his eyebrows, and protruding his lips after a fashion of his own, and which plainly showed that he regarded Peter's story as somewhat apocryphal. He said nothing more, however, but continued to stare very hard at a particular nail which raised its polished head above the well-worn floor, and had been made for many years the magnet to collect his scattered thoughts. The nail was not to be looked out of countenance, but stared back again at the deacon with that sort of effrontery communicated by the knowledge of a dangerous secret. Presently the deacon raised his head, and passing his hand over his forehead, as if he had wiped off all thought for the present, he walked briskly across the store to commence business for the day; while Peter, mounted on a lofty stool, testified the exuberance of his good humor, by whistling

"Old Dan Tucker," shaking his head, thumming with his fingers, and making all sorts of comical faces; all which showed that he considered himself not only a very lucky, but a very clever fellow.

In spite, however, of his assurance, Mary had not the least suspicion of the true nature of his visit. Neither had Aunt Rebecca, with all her sagacity, detected the unwonted presence of the blind god in her little parlor. But little Mrs. Grant had been in love herself—she had sat up nights with her Joshua; she still remembered his first visit, and all the successive steps of their long courtship. After Mary had bid the old ladies good night, "What should you think," said Aunt Bethany, "of a match between our Mary and Peter?"

"It will be time enough to think of that when the young people are old enough to think of it themselves; though, perhaps, you were so blind as to suppose he came to see her this evening! If he did, I should be glad to know how it happened that he addressed most of his conversation to me?"

"I know, that's just the way my poor dear Joshua did, the first time I ever saw him at our house. He hardly spoke a word to me the whole time I was there, but kept talking to father about his farm. I remember, bimeby he said, says he, 'well Bethany! I see you at meetin' last Sunday.' I said, 'did you though, really?' and pretty soon he got up, and said he guessed he must be going. After he'd gone, father and mother both said what a nice, smart, stiddy young man he was, and what a good husband he'd make if I could only just git him; but I'm sure I'd no idea, then, what was to happen, no more'n nothing at all;" and Aunt Bethany smiled once, and then sighed regularly once a minute, till it was time to go to bed.

"Hm!" said Aunt Rebecca, "just as if everybody in the world, was like everybody else! but I spose you think I know nothing about such matters! But some folks could tell a story about that as well as other folks, it they'd only a mind."

It soon became known throughout Totemwell, that Peter Redwood was courting Mary Wallace. The old women talked over the matter over their knitting, and agreed that

it would be a very proper sort of a match, and that they would make a very handsome couple. The young women thought Peter Redwood might do better than marry a girl nobody knew anything about, and who couldn't even tell the name of her own father. And, after all, they couldn't see as she was so much better, or prettier, than anybody else, for all the fellers made such a fuss about her. The same fellers, on the other hand, wondered how so smart a girl as Mary could put up with such a dunderpate as Pete Redwood, who didn't know B from a broomstick, nor C from a cat's elbow. Yet none ventured to dispute the prize with him, so that he had the field all to himself, with ample opportunity to practice all those arts recommended by his father, as best fitted to circumvent and carry captive the heart of an innocent maiden.

About a month after Peter's first visit, Mary took her work and went over to spend the evening with Mrs. Edgerly. The deacon watched her from his door, where he was just then talking with a customer, and resolved to take the opportunity of sounding Aunt Rebecca on the subject that now chiefly occupied his thoughts.

"Ah!" he sighed, after a few unimportant remarks on the weather, "how many mercies we have to be thankful for! yet how little thankful we are for them. I never knew a time, seems to me, so distinguished for profanity and irreligion and a worldly temper."

"Yes," replied Aunt Rebecca, "it is indeed dreadful. I I am sometimes sorry I have lived so long, the world has grown so much worse since my younger days."

"That is very wrong," mildly replied the deacon; "what would the world come to if all it laughs at as old-fashioned were to be at once removed? No, you have a work to do, and you must wait patiently till it be accomplished."

"Well, I'm sure I am willing to wait, if I can be of any service to my perishing fellow-creatures; but we all have our doubts, you know, sometimes."

"Certainly, certainly, we were not mortal without it; but you must not allow your doubts to interfere with your usefulness. And really, we cannot do without you. You

do not know how much Mr. Merrill and myself depend upon your coöperation."

"I sometimes think I might have been useful, if it had not been for my besetting sin of levity. You can't think, deacon, how much suffering that has caused me; though, I think I have made some advance towards overcoming it. But, then, I'm only a woman; if I had been a man, I might have exerted a considerable influence; but—"

"You do exert a very great influence—an influence, I will venture to say, that is felt as widely as that of any man among us—an influence that will continue to be felt as long as any respect remains for the highest genius and the most exalted virtue."

"But if I could only have been permitted to preach—"

"You would doubtless have filled that sacred office with the highest credit to yourself and profit to others; but there are other ways of serving the Lord, besides preaching; and, allow me to say, you ought to be thankful for being allowed to do so much, without murmuring because you have not been able to do more. It ought to be no little satisfaction to you to see your good example and excellent precepts taking such deep root in the heart of your adopted daughter. It is really refreshing to see a young person like her growing up in the practice of such well-regulated habits of morality and religion; especially, when most of our young people are so much given to vain and trifling amusements."

"Yes, Mary is a good girl, and I'm sure she ought to be, for I have spared no pains on her education. She was brought up in the old-fashioned way, you know, to read her Bible, and mind when she's spoken to, without asking too many questions."

"The very sum and substance of good government!" cried the deacon; "and I only wish there were more such old-fashioned notions among us."

"And, though I say it, that shouldn't say it, I don't believe there's a girl in the village that can make a better batch of bread or pies either, or is more handy about her work; though, to be sure, I had trouble enough dinging it into her."

"It would be strange, indeed, if she didn't excel in that

department, with the opportunities she's had; and I believe such things always come natural to your family."

"They came natural enough to me; for I can't remember the time when I didn't know as much as I do now; but as to Mary, there were some things I thought she never *would* learn. You can't think how much trouble I had before I could get her to set her oven a heating 'fore she put her bread into the pans; and, even now, if I don't watch her pretty sharply, she'll just as like as not get her pies in the wrong plates!"

"Well, that *is* singular! but she is young yet, and we can't expect every one to have the same judgment and — love of order that you possess. But, now I think of it, how old is she? I ought to know, but I'm sure I've forgotten."

"She will be, if she lives, eighteen next March, as near as I can make it out."

"Eighteen! can it be possible! and it seems only yesterday that she was a little thing no higher than that table; and the next thing we know, she'll be getting married, I suppose."

"No, indeed! I've no thoughts of marrying her these ten years. I don't approve of these early matches. If folks must be married at all, they ought to wait, at all events, till they are old enough to know what they're about; and then, we shouldn't see so many unfortunate marriages as we do now."

"Well, really! I never looked at it in that light before, but I believe you're right; it is certainly a pity that, instead of leaving this important question to be decided entirely by youth and inexperience, we who have already been over the road once, should not choose for them. Young people, girls especially, are so apt to be led away by some idle fancy! they think the first young fellow they happen to meet is the very summit of perfection, and then it's too late to remedy the mischief. In fact, if they once begin to think they're in love, all you can say only makes the matter worse. I shouldn't be surprised if Mary had already got some such notions in her head. I see she's been a good deal at Squire Moody's lately; and, in fact, I was told no longer ago than yesterday that John Moody and she were as thick as two

peas in a pod—not a very proper expression, it seems to me, to use about a young lady, under any circumstances."

"Why, Deacon Redwood! you don't mean so! surely, you're not in earnest!"

"Those were certainly the very words; I should not have mentioned it, but I thought you ought to know what was going on in your own family. I am very much surprised to find they have been so hasty and imprudent; the least they could do was to consult you about it; but perhaps, after all, it's only a mistake. I dare say there's nothing in it, though at such a susceptible age as Mary's, and with such an affectionate disposition, there's—"

"Susceptible! affectionate! There's no affection in her, nor never was; and no more gratitude than a cat, and not so much; but I don't believe a word of it! She can't have been so ungrateful, and sneaking, and deceiving! And one of those Moodies, too! when she knows I can't bear the sight of 'em! Ugh! she shan't stir out of the house again this—never! without she'll promise never to go near 'em as long as she lives. But I suspected it; I might 'a known she didn't go up to the farm so often for nothing; and she didn't dare say right out what she went for. I should thought she'd had a little more self-respect, than to be running after the fellers—but she always went to see Susan Moody! I'll Susan Moody her—little!!"

"I cannot but admire your noble sensitiveness on this occasion, my dear madam! and I applaud your resolution; but if you will allow me to suggest a plan, I think the safest way to prevent the recurrence of such proceedings in future, would be for you to select a suitable husband for the young lady at once. No one can doubt, for a moment, but that your well-known sagacity would be exerted to the utmost for such a purpose, and would enable you to make a much better selection than she would be likely to make herself. If she should be so ungrateful, not to say unnatural, as to refuse to be governed by your decision, I should have nothing more to offer in her defense; but I will not, I cannot, believe so ill of one that has had the benefit of your instructions."

"Refuse! I'd like to see her refuse! But, ungrateful huzzy! she don't deserve ever to have me do any thing for

her again. I've half a mind to let her take her own way, and never have any thing more to do with her!"

"Now, sister Rebec.!" began Aunt Bethany, but the deacon prudently stopped her with his forefinger, and went on in the most amiable and soothing manner.

"My dear Mrs. Rebecca! excuse me, but really I didn't think you had such an unforgiving temper. From what I had seen of you before, I always supposed that it was your joy and delight to forgive those who had injured you; that you had the spirit of the old martyrs, and positively exulted in receiving an injury, that you might have an opportunity of displaying your christian magnanimity. To be sure, this is an injury almost beyond the reach of forgiveness, at least to most men; I don't say I should forgive it; I am sadly afraid I should not, without a desperate struggle; but you! to whom such things have become easy—almost a second nature—you who have spent almost your life-long in setting an example of patience and charity! but you will forgive her, I know you will, when you come to consult your better judgment."

"You need say no more!" cried Aunt Rebecca, majestically waving her hand; "I forgive her, this once; though none can know how much her conduct has distressed me, not on my own account. An ungrateful child is worse than a snake!"

"It is, indeed, a thousand times; but I trust Mary is not altogether so ungrateful as she seems; at any rate, the greater her ingratitude, the greater will be your satisfaction in exercising what I may call the noblest of the christian virtues. And what greater proof can you give of your full and hearty forgiveness, than providing for her a husband of your own choosing—a husband who shall be fitted by habit and inclination, by natural temper and the strictest religious training—to strengthen and confirm those admirable principles of virtue and religion in which she has been educated? This would be truly a great, a noble, a christian work! worthy of a life spent like yours in acts of charity and mercy. It would be a double triumph, a triumph over your own unforgiving pride—a pride that I am almost disposed to call commendable—and a triumph over the whimsies of a love-sick girl, and the selfish machinations of Squire

Moody; for, after all, I'm afraid he's at the bottom of the whole affair; for certainly nothing would please him so well as to spite you, at the same time that he advanced his own interest. In fact, he makes no secret of his feelings on this point, and doesn't scruple to say that he likes nothing better than to have a worry, as he calls it, with Aunt Rebecca. When I expressed my surprise at his speaking in such an unbecoming manner, he replied in his rough sort o' way, 'Oh, never mind, deacon! there's no bones broken, and it does the old lady good to take the starch out of her once in a while!'"

"Very well! we will see which will get the best of it, Squire Moody or Rebecca Horton; and as for Mary, she shall be married in a month. I am an old woman, I know that very well, but the starch isn't all out of me yet."

"But who will you get? A month's a short time to find a husband!"

"Long enough in all conscience! as things are going now; but I could find twenty in a week!"

"But not, perhaps, such as you would choose."

"Anybody's better than one of those vile Moodies! There's Colonel Totling, he wants a wife bad enough."

"Colonel Totling! why he's old enough to be her father! and, besides, you know his christian character is not so good as it might be."

"Well! there's 'Lijah Harris."

"Hem! 'Lijah is a very good fellow; I can say nothing against him; but I should hardly have dared to propose him as a match for a family as old as the Hortons."

"Well! I havn't had time to think about it enough yet, but I'll find out in a day or two."

The deacon rested his head in his hands, and remained several minutes as if in deep thought. He then suddenly raised his head with a lively animation, and sliding his left hand over his knee seemed about to say something of importance.

"Well?" said Aunt Rebecca.

"I was thinking of proposing; but no! after what I've said, it'll seem too much as if I'd been talking for myself all this time."

"You needn't be afraid of that; as if I couldn't tell when a man means what he says! but, say! what is it?"

"Well, then! I'll throw myself on your candor and generosity; I trust, to be sure, that you've known me long enough to decipher my true character, and to acquit me of any interested motives in all I have been saying. But the fact is, I should have spoken before, only I thought Mary was as good as engaged, and I supposed, of course, with your approbation; but since I find she is not, I will venture to propose an arrangement I have often thought of, but never until now had any hopes of seeing it brought about. The short and the long of it is—hem—well! what do you say to my son Peter?"

"Your Peter?"

"Yes! he is about her own age, not bad looking, prudent, steady, minds his business; his character, since he joined the church, is without reproach; and I really don't see why he wouldn't make a tolerable match."

"Excellent!" nodded Aunt Rebecca.

"My son will have no need to look for money with his wife; he has enough of that already, and I am sure Mary has every other quality he could desire."

"She won't be very poor either!" cried Aunt Rebecca; "my sister and I are not entirely destitute, and it is our intention to leave the whole to her."

"Yes, indeed!" chimed in Aunt Bethany, "she is our own child, and she shall always be treated so! but I beg of you, Deacon Redwood, not to say any thing about it to anybody; for I wouldn't have the poor dear girl hear we'd been talking about such a thing, not for the world!"

The deacon smiled benignly upon Aunt Bethany, as if he fully understood her delicate sensibility, and she need have no fears on his account; then turning to Aunt Rebecca, he exclaimed, "I hope that time may be far distant when you carry your benevolent intentions into effect. But, as that time will come sooner or later, and may come at any moment, it is as well to provide for the worst. For my part, I know not how soon I may be called away, and I confess nothing would give me greater satisfaction, than to see my son so happily married."

"Yes," replied Aunt Rebecca, in a half revery; "I suppose she would have to be married sometime or other; though, for my part, I could never see any thing but worry and vexation from beginning to end, and I wonder that girls can be so foolish! But there's sister Bethany, you'd naturally suppose she'd be o' the same way o' thinking; but, after all she's gone through with, she'd go and be married right over again this minute, if she could."

"To be sure I would, if my poor dear Joshua was alive. Ah, misery me! I've had, as you say, a deal o' trouble, but for all that, I'm as glad I was married: seems tome, as if every thing had gone just exactly right. I wouldn't be unmarried not for a single day, for it would seem as if he was not mine any longer. But, as to Mary, it seems sort o' different; I can't bear to think of losing her. It's selfish, I know, an' all that; but I can't bear to think of her loving anybody better than me. Oh, dear! it's always the way! well! I suppose it's all right, and we hadn't oughter complain."

"How you talk!" cried Aunt Rebecca; "now, for my part, I think the deacon is more'n half right, and if I have my way about it, they shall be married next Thursday is a fortnight. I'm sure everybody says Peter Redwood is one of the finest young men in Totemwell, and there's enough would jump at the chance. But what is of infinitely greater importance, he has a great regard for morality and religion, and—"

"I know it; I don't mean to go to say anything against Peter Redwood; and, if Mary is willing, I don't know as I ought to make any objection."

"If Mary is willing! it would be strange, indeed, if she wasn't willing. For my part, I don't know what she has to say about it. If we take the trouble to find a husband for her, she ought to be very much obliged to us; and, if she isn't, it only shows how hard and ungrateful the heart of man can be if it's only a mind to."

"To be sure!" cried the deacon; "I have the same opinion of Mary's good sense and gratitude that you have yourself; but we don't intend to hurry her, or put any improper restraint upon her inclinations. They are generally inclined to be a little notional and self-willed on such occa-

sions, and like to have it supposed they have every thing their own way, you know, and we may as well humor 'em a little;" and the deacon laughed—such a good-natured, sympathetic laugh, that the old ladies couldn't help laughing too, and thinking that Deacon Redwood had one of the kindest hearts in the world.

"Yes!" said he rising, "we were all young once, and we musn't be too hard on the poor thing! but, then, on the other hand, it's no more than fair, as you say, that she should submit herself entirely to your judgment, especially as we none of us have any thing but her advantage in view. Good evening, Mrs. Grant! good evening, Miss Rebecca! I leave the whole thing in your hands; whatever Mary may do, I for one am willing to be guided entirely by your judgment."

"Well!" he said to himself, as he walked slowly home, "so far good! matters are in an excellent train; and now, if the girl makes no more trouble, in a month from now they'll be man and wife, and then all will be right and tight. But the idea of Aunt Rebecca's being a minister! no wonder wise men scoff at religion, when they see it defended by a parcel of such weak-minded, bigoted old women. But shall I tell Peter the happiness that's in store for him? No! better not! he knows enough already; if he knew all it would completely upset him. And he'd be just as likely as not to blurt it all out, and that would ruin every thing. Folks would say I hadn't acted honestly—that I ought to have made the whole thing known at once; and I'm not sure that that wouldn't have been the most direct course; but it's too late now—it would only make trouble, and in a few weeks all will be right. I am sure I am doing all I can for her advantage; and if I seek my own at the same time, what is there wrong in that? the laborer is worthy of his hire. Besides, what difference does it make whether I tell her now or a few weeks hence? Perhaps, after all, it isn't true, and then she'd be sadly disappointed. Yes! on the whole, I think it would be decidedly wrong to raise hopes that after all might not be realized."

Again the deacon sat before the half-starved fire, in his dingy kitchen, over which a single lank, decrepid candle shed its melancholy light. The candle evidently did its

best; it shone with all its feeble might, and wore out its little life in fruitless efforts to illumine an apartment that received all its advances with the most chilling ingratitude. Even the blessed light of the sun seemed to lose its vigor the moment it passed through those narrow windows; it hung like a dirty mist on the furniture and walls, or fell pale and lifeless on the floor. Still the little candle—this "good deed in a naughty world"—this self-sacrificing martyr—this Abdiel "among the faithless faithful only he"—steadily shone on; and while it shone, seemed the life and intelligence of the whole house. Presently the deacon roused himself, and taking down a lantern that hung over the fireplace, stuck the stout-hearted little hero in the middle, as Gulliver erewhile was thrust by the envious dwarf into the scalding marrowbone. Thus pent up in its tin prison, the candle sifted its yellow rays through all its narrow loopholes, and covered the walls and ceiling with a shifting chequer-work of light and shade. The deacon walked in the edge of a circle dark as night; and a gigantic shadow, threateningly bending over him, stalked with capricious, noiseless footsteps along the wall.

CHAPTER XVII.

DR. EDGERLY AT HOME.

When Mary entered the cheerful sitting-room at Dr. Edgerly's, she found him in his characteristic position, and gazing into the fire, or rather beyond it, as intently as if he were attempting to solve some mathematical problem, or were watching all the changing "currents of a heady fight."

"Humph! good for nothing!" he exclaimed, rising with sudden alacrity, "why havn't you been to see me? You promised to come at least as often as twice a week. But I'm glad to see you, nevertheless. Here! take this chair; take two chairs; take all the chairs there are in the room; and if that isn't enough, I'll bring some more."

"Why!" laughed Mary, "what in the world can I do with so many?"

"Oh! when one's tired out, you know, you can take another, like a man traveling post; you see I want to keep you as long as possible."

"But suppose you got tired, as well as the chair?"

"Oh! I could change myself, too. I hope you don't think I'm so poor as to have only one self!"

"No, indeed! for I'm sure you have at least a dozen faces, and I believe you change as often as the moon."

"And which of them all do you like best?"

"Which of your faces?"

"No! which of my selves?"

"I like them all—sometimes one and sometimes another."

"But you don't like them all alike?"

"No, I don't think I do."

"And which do you like best?"

"Let me see! I don't like your silent self, and I don't like your—your making-fun-of-others self."

"Well! did one ever hear the like! You don't like me

to be silent, and you know I never can talk without making fun, as you call it—and my favorite character, too! But I'll forgive you terribly, you quibbling, criticizing little gipsy!"

"Now, don't! I beg of you! Any thing but that."

"I will; I can't help it; I'll forgive you as nobody was ever forgiven before! I feel just like it to-day."

"Oh, dear! well, I think your forgiving self is worse than all the others; but you've been castle-building again; you know you have, for I caught you at it, and after saying so many times you meant to break off the habit."

"There it is again! You're determined to give me no quiet! But Mary, when you're as old a man as I am, you'll find bad habits are not broken so easily; that is, if—which God forbid—you have any bad habits to break. But you must know it's one of my theories—I've quite a numerous family of 'em, by the way—that a habit formed before marriage, can never be entirely eradicated. Whether this is true or not, I find it exceedingly convenient, since it prevents a great many disputes that would otherwise arise between me and my wife. She is a sensible woman, and at once perceived the advantage this would give her; so we have mutually agreed to leave each other's pet habits unmolested; and I've no doubt we get along a good deal better in consequence. But in earnest; I was thinking, when you came in, of a much more serious matter; and one in which I imagine you'll be quite as much interested as myself. I have just returned from a visit to Squire Moody, and I left him in a very critical situation. Indeed, I think it extremely doubtful if he ever recovers."

"I knew he was very sick, but I'd no idea he was so bad as that. I was up at his house day before yesterday, and then he seemed quite strong and cheerful, and talked about the first time I went to the farm, and he hoped I should live to come a great many times more. I don't know how I shall do at all without my good old uncle; and I'm so sorry for poor Mrs. Moody and Susan; how badly they must feel!"

"Yes, death is almost always sad to the survivors; it is a painful, disagreeable shock, even to the most selfish; and Mrs. Moody is not selfish; she loves her husband, I do believe, most devotedly. But she cannot be unhappy long; there is no affinity between her and sorrow—it runs from

her like rain from a duck's back; she is too active, too stirring, too bustling a woman, for that rust to eat into."

"Well, I don't know but what you're right; yet it does seem as if no one could ever get over the loss of such a husband."

"He is indeed a husband and a friend, such as one seldom meets with in this world. It is more than ten years since I first saw him, and every year I've liked him better. He has shrewdness without cunning, benevolence without ostentation, and a blunt sincerity without the least dash of malice or ill-nature. I never could understand how a man who has mingled so much with the world, and shown himself so well able to meet it on its own ground, should have preserved his heart so fresh and uncontaminated. See what a contrast there is between him and Colonel Totling! or Deacon Redwood, for instance! He has more influence, if he chose to exert it, and more weight of character, than both of 'em; yet he's as simple and open-hearted as a child."

"Do you think, then, that in order to be successful in the world, it is necessary to learn all the lessons of evil the world teaches?"

"Certainly! as necessary as for the soldier to learn the arms and discipline of the enemy he has to encounter."

"But why can't we learn all these things, and yet not do them?"

"Can one take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? It's the fashion to measure a man's worth by his success; but really, they are often to be taken in inverse proportion to each other. One can hardly be successful without self-sacrifice. He must give up somewhat that his conscience, his self-respect, his independence bid him retain. He must lose a part of his individuality, and assume the character of his class. The more he's like other folks, the better; originality is a perpetual stumbling-block, and eccentricity is ruin."

"Then it is better not to succeed, if this is the price we must pay for it."

"Yes! for one who feels this as keenly as I have supposed. But this is seldom the case. Most men are scarcely conscious that they have a private peculiar soul, and when

they are conscious of it, they are glad to be relieved of the irksome responsibility by absorption into the mass."

"Don't you think that I am an individual?"

"No more than the rest of us. If you were, you would not be half so great a favorite. I'm not sure I should like you so well myself. It is because you have re-fashioned yourself so skillfully, according to its Procrustean rules, that society regards you with such complacency."

"Dear me! you'll make me out, at this rate, to be nothing in the world but just hypocrisy and affectation!"

"Perhaps my theory might lead to that conclusion, for it's inconvenient dealing with particular cases. But here comes my wife to say that supper's ready; so, if you please, we will change this discussion for one more agreeable."

"And she'll be glad enough, too, I'll warrant!" cried Mrs. Edgerly. "I see; you've been tormenting her as you used to me, before I got used to it. It's a positive shame, I declare, when any one comes to see you, to go and be so stupid!"

"'Stupid!' I hope, Miss Mary, *you* don't think I've been stupid? Why, I can be ten times as stupid as that! and not half try, either. But now for supper, and the children! Let us put away care and sorrow, and all other unprofitable wisdom, and descend for a while to their level; or rather ascend, for the path of life is ever downward. Here you have a whole soul, free from conventionalities, free from all affectation, almost as it came from the hands of its Maker. Ah, my little Maggy!" he added, as he kissed the little girl, and lifted her into the chair by his side, "would that it could be always so! but 'enjoy while you may short pleasures, for long woes are to succeed.'"

"Would you have her a child always?" asked Mary, after a moment's pause, while the doctor vigorously stirred the sugar in his tea, an operation which he performed, so said Mrs. Edgerly, at least ten times to every cup.

"I believe she would be happier, though I didn't mean that exactly; I was thinking of the lines, Hood's I believe they are,—

'I remember! I remember the fir trees dark and high,
I used to think their slender tops were close against the sky.
I'm wiser now than I was then; but, ah! 'tis little joy,
To think I'm farther off from heaven than when I was a boy.'

"It is painful to see, as we grow older, one illusion vanishing after another, till we come down to the hard, dry, naked reality; to find that there is so much less poetry and romance in the world than we had imagined; that the good are less good, the beautiful less beautiful, the sky less blue, the flowers less sweet. It is in this sense I would have her always a child. The child believes every thing; among men, we learn to doubt every thing, and the more one knows, the less he believes: they will take nothing on trust, not even happiness. They turn it over so often, and examine it so curiously for fear it should be counterfeit, that it is worn to shreds in the process; and then they cry out against all happiness as false and impossible. Watch any child, almost, playing with its simple toys. It makes believe that its dolls are real men and women; that its wooden horse or dog is capable of feeling tired or hungry, and of returning its attachment. It is this 'make believe' that makes such simple means so powerful, and it is because men cannot make believe, that life with most of us is no better than a 'twice-told tale vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man.'"

The doctor went on sometime longer in the same strain, but Mary, in whom at such times there seemed to be a little touch of malice, continued to start one objection after another, and at last fairly drove him into a corner.

"Oh, you little plague!" he exclaimed. "I never saw you so obstinate and self-willed before; really you're growing quite intolerable; but, at any rate, I would have my children grow old slowly. I would have them remain as long as possible in the dim twilight of a simple credulity, before they emerged into the glaring sunlight of facts, where faith and wonder languish, and men reason where once they were content to enjoy."

"Ah! your own illustration is against you, for light is certainly better than darkness."

"I don't know about that!" said the doctor stoutly; "night has always been the favorite with the poets; but I see you are determined to put me out of humor; and, in fact, if I wasn't the best-natured person that ever lived, I should have been in a passion long ago, for here's my wife been treading on my toes I don't know how long, as a sign for me to stop. I believe I'm the best-abused man in the

world; for just as sure as my wife sees me getting the best of an argument, she begins to distract my attention in some such underhand way as this."

"It does very little good after all; but it's a shame for you to expose me in that way before folks. He'd have done just the same if there'd been a room full of company, and all I can say and do doesn't make him a bit better. I'm always afraid, when we have company, that he'll say something or other, for it never makes any difference who's here; and I believe if the governor was to dine with us, he'd run on just as he always does."

"Now, my dear! you're certainly mistaken for once in your life; for, if Mary wasn't here, I should say that this table-cloth was hardly fit to be used, at least for company."

"There! you *have* said it! and I dare say she'd never have noticed it if you hadn't told her."

"I told her! I say that the table-cloth is dirty! I've no thoughts of saying a word about it! I only said I should have said so, if she hadn't been here."

"But I tell you, you *have* said it. I never saw such a man in my life! And you did it on purpose too, I can tell by your laughing; well, I believe I am the most matter-of-fact person in existence; there doesn't a day pass without William's teasing me in that way, and all because I never can tell whether one is in jest or in earnest."

"I should rather have said," returned Mary, "that it was owing to your childlike simplicity and credulity; here is a practical example of his theory that ought to satisfy him how inconvenient it would really be."

"Inconvenient to my wife perhaps, but very convenient and agreeable to me. I hate your knowing folks, that are always and forever on the look-out! I never could live comfortably with anyone that I couldn't occasionally take napping. My wife knows this, and she very good-naturedly allows me to deceive her as often as I please."

"I'm sure she's very obliging!" cried Mary; "I don't believe I should be half so disinterested."

"No, I dare say not; but then there would be all the more satisfaction when you were caught; but come, if you are all done, let us go back into the sitting-room."

But Mary preferred to remain and assist Mrs. Edgerly in

clearing away the supper, and washing the dishes; so the doctor took little Maggy and her younger brother, Maurice, and sat down before the fire in the ghostly little parlor. This was the favorite hour both with him and with the children. It was his custom, when not called away by the duties of his profession, to tell them a story, generally of a fanciful or grotesque character; though he sometimes yielded to the oft-repeated remonstrances of his wife, and substituted something that was more true and practical, as she called it. It was easy to see that the little Maggy resembled her father much more than her mother. The sprites and goblins that formed the chief part of his dramatis personæ, were to her in the light of the most palpable and stubborn facts. She had no more doubt of their existence than that of her Uncle Timothy, and her Aunt Sarah, or of anyone else she had never seen and spoken to. To her there was nothing incredible in all the miracles of fairyland, or in the feats ascribed to more powerful and malignant spirits. Her world was almost entirely an ideal; and her large dreamy eyes, with their woful stare, while seemingly fixed on vacancy, were full of sights of joy and wonder, o horror and amaze.

"Now, father! you must tell us a story! and a good long one too, for you know you havn't told us any this ever so long."

"Is a week, then, so long? the time is coming when a year will be short, but, now, what shall it be about?"

"Oh! tell us about Carrabambo!" said Maggy, and, "yes, tell us about Caabammo!" said Maurice.

Carrabambo was the name of the household fairy or goblin, whose favorite haunt was supposed to be in a certain mysterious and unexplored region under the eaves; though he was not confined to any particular locality, but was now here, now there, always in mischief, yet never detected; strong enough to upset tables and chairs, yet small enough to squeeze through a keyhole, or hide himself under a thimble. The shapes in which he appeared were exceedingly various. Sometimes he took the form of a large black cat, a rat, or a mouse, frightening Mrs. Edgerly almost into hysterics; at others he took possession of some familiar article, as a chair, a curtain, or a bed-post, which straightway

assumed a character strangely at variance with its usually staid and dignified demeanor. If a dish slipped from the clumsy fingers of a servant, if the coffee-pot boiled over, or a brand rolled out on to the hearth, Carrabambo was sure to be at the bottom of the mischief. If the bread was heavy, or the butter wouldn't come, Carrabambo had got into the yeast, or had hidden himself in the churn. Carrabambo left open all the doors, blew out the lights, dropped the bucket into the well, and displayed his mischievous ingenuity in ways too numerous to mention. The children regarded this frisky sprite with mingled fear and admiration; they firmly believed they had seen him at long intervals whisking through the dark entry, or dodging behind a table; and they listened to their father's recital of his pranks with unwearied interest.

"A great many years ago," began the doctor, "longer ago than I can remember, some men came and built this house right in among the woods. There wasn't another house anywhere near it, nothing but the trees and the sky and the clouds. Once every pleasant day the sun came peeping down into the little clearing, and when he saw the house he laughed, and nodded his head, as much as to say, 'Ah! I am very glad! here's a nice place for me to stop and rest, after wading so long among those gloomy-looking pines! I mean to shine here as hard as ever I can.' And the folks that lived in the house were as glad to see the sun as the sun was to see them; and they cut away the trees, so that he might have a good chance, and they planted plenty of corn and pumpkins and potatoes; because they knew the sun didn't like bare ground, but wanted to see every thing bright and green about him. Well, the very day the house was finished, there came a whole troop of fairies, riding on thistle-downs—Carrabambo, with his father and mother, his aunts and uncles, and all his other relations, to see if the house was ready for him to come and live in."

"What was his father's name?"

"Great Odomondod. So they all lighted on the roof, and fastened their horses to the shingles; and then Great Odomondod climbed up the chimney to see if there was any fire; because fairies, you know, never can go into a house until a fire has been kindled in some part of it; but the folks hadn't

built any fire yet; so Great Odomondod went back to his companions, and told them they would have to wait a while longer, until they saw the smoke coming out of the top of the chimney. It was a very big chimney, and filled up nearly one third of the house, with a monstrous fire-place, just such as fairies love; and I have heard, though I don't know how true it is, that they'll never stay in a house a single day after it has a stove in it. Well, while the fairies were resting on the roof, riding a-straddle on the ridge-pole, scampering over the shingles, and cutting up all sorts of didoes, the folks down stairs brought in a great lot of chips and shavings, and a whole cart-load of pine and walnut, to make a rousing great fire for a house-warming. They piled the wood all up very carefully in the chimney, and when they had it ready to kindle, they were going to kindle it with the tinder-box; but the farmer said, 'No! we'll wait till it is just twelve o'clock, and then I'll light a match with my burning glass.' He had been reading, I suppose, about a fire that was kept burning all the time, a great many hundred years ago, and if ever, by any accident, it happened to go out, they used to kindle it again by the sun, because they thought that fire was purer than any other. He was an old, whimsical sort o' man, and had lived a great while in England, where it is so dark, most of the time, that they have to use burning-glasses in order to see to read, and put them all over their fields, so as to ripen the grain. But I don't believe it's quite so bad as that, after all.

"However, his wife and children were amazingly tickled at the idea of the sun lighting their fire, though they didn't believe it could be done either and the farmer himself wasn't quite sure about it, but he thought he would try at all events. So as soon as the clock struck twelve, when the sun is usually the hottest, he went out in front of the house, and held up the glass for the sun to light his match. 'Pho!' said the sun, 'I can do that easy enough!' just as if he had known what they were all thinking about; and the match blazed up so suddenly that the farmer was frightened, and came very near dropping it from his fingers. The children all laughed and clapped their hands; but the father lighted a big splinter with the match, and then he

carried the splinter into the house, and pushed it in under the wood in the chimney, and sat down on the settle to watch what would happen. He made his wife sit down too, beside him, and put his arm round her waist (just as you and mama, said Margy); and the children stood looking on, some on one side and some on the other. The little flame at first seemed scared and frightened, and hardly knew what to do, the chimney was so big, and the wood so large and heavy; it went feeling its way along ever so softly, climbing higher and higher, and smelling here and there, just as the pussy-cat did, you know, when your Aunt Mary first gave her to you. It nibbled away a little at the shavings, and found they tasted very good. It smacked its lips, and its eyes sparkled; it grew big, and strong, and fierce as a lion; it swelled, and roared, and mumbled the pine logs and the walnut; its mane streamed way up the chimney; the fairies smelt the smoke, and down they came helter skelter in great glee. And the fire knew them, and was afraid, and bowed its head and kissed Carrabambo's foot; for it knew that he was to be its master.

"So Carrabambo came into the house and took possession; and all his relations came with him, to see what kind of a house he had got to live in. They went into all the rooms and closets, into all the barrels and boxes and firkins; they ran up stairs and down stairs, up into the garret and down into the cellar; and when they had seen all there was to be seen, they kissed Carrabambo and went off through the chimney, for fairies have to go out the same way they come in; but Carrabambo stayed behind, all by himself, and, poor fellow! he was so homesick! But every year his father and mother and all his other relations come to visit him, and then he goes to see them, and they have such merry doings as would make you laugh till you cried, and wish you were a fairy too."

"Oh! I do wish so! Why can't I be a fairy? I'm so tired of being only a little girl!"

"There are better things than to be a fairy, my little precious! Yes! and worse things than to be a little girl! Fairies die and live no more, but little girls are little angels soon: but hear the rest of Carrabambo. He has lived here ever since that day I was telling you about, way back among

the shadows of the woods, and the deeper shadows of a hundred years; and here he will always live till the house is burnt up, or tumbles to pieces."

"And where will he go then?"

"Then he will die; for his life is bound up in the life of the house; and when he dies, he'll die all over; nothing of him will be left—you never can find him, if you should hunt for him a thousand years; poor Carrabambo!"

"Oh dear! I'm ever so sorry! Ain't you sorry, too, dear papa?"

"Yes! my precious little lambkin! as sorry as I can afford to be; but there are so many demands on my sorrow that I've very little to spare. In fact, rich as I have ever been in this commodity, I have never had more than I knew what to do with; and, if I had a hundred times as much, I believe there would still be no superfluity."

The child listened to this address with open mouth, and an air of wondering but serious attention.

"Tell me, my little sucking rose-bud, what do you think of the philosophy of life; is joy as sweet as sorrow is bitter? is the brightness of the day equal to the darkness of the night? summer's heat to winter's cold? Say now! which was right, Solomon or Longfellow? is this world a soap-bubble? you know something about them, I fancy—what a pipe it must have taken to blow it!"

Margy listened and wondered harder than ever. She saw the twinkle in his eye, the little, smiling, mocking, melancholy fiend that she was afraid of. She laughed and blushed, and hid her face on her father's shoulder.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, warmly returning her caresses, "mein bestes Kind! wie lieb ich dich!" then suddenly changing his mood, he began to play with her in the same identical way that has been in fashion among fathers ever since Adam dandled Cain; making faces, growling like "an Elisha bear" or a famished earthquake, and making use of similar ingenious devices, till the little girl was almost convulsed with laughter.

"I declare!" cried Mrs. Edgerly, as she and Mary entered the room, "I believe my husband means to spoil that child; her head is now so full of ghosts and witches that she can hardly think of any thing else. At this rate, by

the time she grows up, she'll be as odd as Kate Mullein or Dick's hat-band, or as—"

"Or as I am myself," cried her husband, laughing; "thank you for the compliment; but really, I don't think there's any danger. If I had had such a mother, I'm sure I should have had a much better-ordered intellect; and I trust to your influence to counteract any evil consequences that might ensue."

"But I can't bear to have her feed on sugar-plums all the time. If you would only give her something a little more substantial once in a while—"

"Well, my dear, I'm ready to do all I can to please you, and if you think so much of true stories, I'm sure I'll tell her one with all my heart. Here, Margy! your mother thinks you have eaten macaroni long enough; so now I'm going to give you some roast beef and potatoes. Once there was a little boy who lived in Maine. Maine is one of the United States. There are thirty-one, I believe, in all; so that if you and Maurice and the little boy I'm going to tell you about were all together, you might have ten a-piece, and there'd be one left for manners. I hope, though, you'd be generous enough to give at least one to your mother and me; for generosity is considered one of the cardinal virtues. I don't know how many cardinal virtues there are exactly; but there are four cardinal points of the compass, and they are very useful to sailors, to tell which way the wind blows. Besides these, there is a bird called the cardinal grosbeak; and the Pope, who lives at Rome, has a number of cardinals; one of the most famous was named Wolsey, and he came very near drowning himself once by swimming on bladders, as you'll perhaps read some day in Shakspeare. There, my dear, I've told you a true story, and given you a lesson in geography, history, moral philosophy, navigation, ornithology, and I don't know what all. If anybody can do better than that, I'd like to have them try."

"But where is the story?" said Margy.

"The story! oh, the story is, Once there was a little boy, who lived in Maine."

"What a queer story!" said Margy.

"Yes, it is like a kite that's nearly all bob, or a sausage,

that isn't good for much without the stuffing; but it's true, every word of it; and I hope now, my dear, you won't deny that I have given her something substantial once in my life."

"Now, you know I didn't mean any such thing! but you might, when you're telling her your stories, begin with some little useful thing or other that'll do her good, and—"

"That is, she musn't have any cake till she has eaten so much bread—or if she'll be a good girl, and take her medicine, she shall have a lump of sugar; certainly, a good rule in physics, and perhaps equally applicable in metaphysics and ethics. It is, after all, only the equilibrium of forces; you train her judgment and observation, and I her imagination; my lessons will strengthen her powers of wit, fancy, logic, analysis, &c., and yours her judgment and understanding. There is nothing like division of labor; and if our Margy doesn't grow up a perfect prodigy, it won't be my fault, or yours."

"Well!" said Mrs. Edgerly, turning to Mary, "I see it's no use talking with him to-night; he's got on his high-heeled shoes, so we may as well let him alone."

"Yes!" but you can see by his laughing, that he don't believe himself one word of all he's been saying."

"Why! what a provoking little skeptic you are!" cried the doctor, "you won't allow me to believe any thing. I'm sure it's very hard if one can't have the satisfaction of believing what he pleases; don't you see that such a rule is destructive of all individuality of character? For my part, I'm always delighted to find a man who has sturdy independence enough to maintain what the vulgar herd might consider an impossible faith. I can't help feeling a sort of sympathy for one who believes in the sea-serpent, or in mermaids; and if he adds to this, a faith in animal magnetism, the honesty of politicians, the wisdom of great men, and the constancy of friendship, I am ready to hug him with a forty-grisly-bear power. But speaking o' beans, Lige Harris sprained his shoulder at the husking the other night; and I promised to call up this evening, and see how he was getting along. I shan't ask to be excused, for I see you're dying to get rid of me, so that you may communicate to each other the thousand and one important secrets that

have happened since a week ago. How glad I am that I don't have the misfortune to be one of your intimate friends! Well! well! never look so doleful about it; it's not your fault, it's your nature, and, I dare say, they're even with you; so you can say what you please with a good conscience. Good evening, Miss Mary! make haste, for I shall be back in an hour, and I have something to tell you."

"Hem!" said the doctor to himself, as soon as he got into the street; "what a fool I am to talk such everlasting nonsense. I believe I have no more dignity than a monkey; I'm always saying some foolish smart thing or other, and then I'm mad enough with myself to bite my tongue off. Strange! that I never can hit the right medium, but must always be either a sullen fool, or a noisy fool, either a magpie or an owl. Well! I'll try once more, and see if I can't do a little better in future!"

"Well!" said Mrs. Edgerly, "I'm glad he's gone, at any rate; for we shouldn't had any peace while he was here? but did you ever see such plagues as men are?"

"Never in my life; but then there's hardly any thing worth having that isn't a great plague, and if we could contrive any way to get rid of men, I'm afraid something worse would come in their place."

"Yes! I dare say, though I can't imagine what it would be, for I'm sure they're some of them the very perfection of ugliness—as ugly as they can live; but then I ought not to complain, for I'm sure I've got one of the best husbands in the world; but I want to know if you saw that horrid bonnet Tibby Gaskins had on last Sunday."

"No! what was it?"

"Well! the bonnet itself was well enough, but there! such trimming! I certainly never saw the beat. She'd gone and put on a staring yellow ribbon, made up into a monstrous bow as big as a sun-flower; and she'd stuck inside a bunch of artificial flowers with all the colors of the rainbow. And you know, she's got a new Rob-roy, drab and black; so you can imagine how she must have looked; why, I could hardly keep my eyes off of her all meeting time!"

"What a pity she hasn't more taste, for she's really such a pretty girl."

"Pretty! some folks call her pretty, but I don't fancy her exactly; she's too pale to suit my taste."

"She hasn't a great deal of color, certainly, but then she has such a sweet expression."

"Yes! I know, she looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, but I want to know if it's true, she's engaged to John Moody?"

"No! she isn't; I'm sure of that; at least I don't think she is; but I really don't know any thing about it."

"Why, how you blush! I shouldn't wonder if you're engaged to him yourself; well he's a real nice fellow, and after all you might go farther and fare worse."

"I dare say I should; but I don't expect ever to be married at all."

"Oh no! of course not! nobody ever does; but you'll think better of it one of these days."

"I don't think I ever shall; but at any rate it won't be John Moody."

"Well! I won't tease you, for you're a dear good girl, and would tell me I know as soon as anybody; but there's one thing I want to tell you, and that is, that you must never marry a doctor. Not that I'd change for any man in the world, for I wouldn't; but, then, when one isn't engaged the case is different. It's nothing but go, go, go, from morning till night; and there's never a moment he can call his own. I can hardly ever have him all to myself, for just as soon as we get to talking comfortably about any thing, and I begin to think I'm going to have a good nice time, somebody or other sends after him, and he has to up and run. And, what's worse, I don't see as it'll ever be any different."

"Oh, well! there's no knowing; perhaps he'll get rich some o' these days, and then he won't have to work so hard."

"Get rich! I'd like to see my husband getting rich! No! as he says, you might as well try to freeze a blaze, or roast an icicle. But there! I don't care; he's the best man in the world, and I dare say we're quite as happy as if we were as rich as a Jew."

"I'm sure you ought to be as happy as the day is long;

for it seems to me I should be contented anywhere with one I loved."

"But the day is very long sometimes; and, besides, this is the very thing I complain of—I'm not with him, at least not half as much as I want to be."

"No! but you see him every day, and you can think of him always, and wonder what he's doing, and think how glad you'll be when he comes home, and how dearly you love him, and how happy you've been together, and how hard you mean to love him; oh! I'm sure I could find enough to think about if every day were a year."

"Oh yes! that would do very well for a while; but wait till you've been married as long as I have, you'd want something else to think of."

"No, indeed! I should think then I'd only just begun; and if I lived a hundred years, I should still find something new; but which would you rather, love, or be loved?"

"I think I like best to be loved."

"Do you? oh! I don't; I like to love a great deal the best; I could almost cry sometimes, to think I can't love any better."

"Well now! to hear you talk, one would suppose you'd never done any thing else; but I say it would be a sin and a shame for you not to get married, only I don't know where we can find anybody good enough for you. I don't know of but one man that is worthy of being loved in that style, or that would even thank you for it; and I can't spare him quite yet, even to oblige you; but here he comes now! I wish you had another just like him!"

"All except the teasing!" said Mary laughing.

"No, teasing and all for me! I wouldn't have him any different from what he is; he's the best man in the world, and I don't believe there'll ever be another like him!"

As the doctor entered and took his seat by the fire, the ladies stopped talking; and bracing up their minds and bodies a little, as ladies are apt to do, when a gentleman approaches of whom they are somewhat afraid, they waited for him to speak. But after he had sat a full minute without taking the slightest notice of either of them, with his lips as tight as the money market during a panic, and looking remarkably sober withal, their curiosity was naturally

aroused to know the meaning of a demeanor so different from that with which he had left them.

"How did you find Lijah Harris?" at length said Mrs. Edgerly, beginning like an adroit diplomatist, at a point as far as possible from the subject in which she was most interested.

"I found him very comfortable."

"I hope you havn't heard any bad news, my dear."

"No! my dear, nothing of the sort."

"Did you hear any thing more about Squire Moody?"

"Nothing."

Mrs. Edgerly had now exhausted her ingenuity, and she turned to Mary with a sort of comic despair, as if imploring her assistance.

"Why, Dr. Edgerly!" cried Mary, boldly coming to the rescue, "what *is* the matter? I shall certainly do something dreadful if you keep us waiting much longer!"

"Why! there is nothing the matter that I know of; what made you suppose there was?"

"Why! you look as if you had lost all the friends you ever had in the world, and you don't say a word."

"Oh! that's it, is it? well, I can explain that to you easy enough. I was trying to be sober, and quiet, and sensible, like other folks; but it's no sort o' use; one might as well try to be quiet in Bedlam."

"Well! cried Mrs. Edgerly, if you ain't the greatest; and here you've been keeping us on tenter-hooks this half hour, and making us imagine all sorts o' mischief, just for the sake of showing how sober and sensible you could be. If that isn't the queerest way of showing one's sense, then I don't know. I'm sure I thought as much as could be that something terrible had happened."

"Well!" exclaimed her husband, rising and stretching; "I'll never try to be sensible again as long as I live. I might have known how it would be; for I never set to work to be as sensible as I could, without it's turning out in just this same way. And I'd defy any man to help it; for you're all against me, instead of speaking an encouraging word, when you see me trying to improve; though you know as well as I do, how hard it is for me, you all set to work to throw as many obstacles in the way as you can."

"Well! if that don't beat the Dutch! when I've been doing all I can to help you, and you know it. But it's all thrown away, I can see that plain enough, and as you say, I don't mean to try any more. I believe you're getting worse than ever!"

"Yes!" said Mary, "you'll have to give him up; he's certainly incorrigible; but I promised Aunt Rebecca to be home early, and it's time for me to go."

While Mary was putting on her things, the doctor continued walking back and forth with his hands in his pockets, smiling and nodding and shrugging his shoulders, occasionally exclaiming with a lackadaisical air, "It's very hard if one can't have the credit of trying! Now if you, Miss Mary, were to take me under your instruction a little while, I think I might make something after all. But there! it's no use striving against nature! I never was meant to be sensible, and I may as well make the best of it;" till at last the hooding, and cloaking, and tippeting, were all over, and he with mock humility offered his arm to Mary to accompany her home. The doctor was obliged to listen, that evening, to a curtain lecture twice as long as usual; but we cannot deny that he richly deserved it, especially as he himself acknowledged his error, and promised to do better in future. We would gladly have kept from the reader this weak point in his character, but justice must be done though the heavens fall; and after all, this single fault, for I really don't know that he had any other, ought easily to be forgiven him on the score of his many virtues.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEING ONE OF SURPRISES.

AUNT REBECCA, having determined in her own mind that the marriage between Peter and Mary should take place as soon as possible, also determined to lose no time in communicating to her the deacon's proposition. She accordingly waited impatiently for her return, solacing herself meanwhile with magnanimous contemplations of her own wonderful sagacity, and all those other statesmanlike qualities in which she so exceedingly rejoiced. As she thus sat there alone, Aunt Bethany having as usual retired at an early hour, all the mantles of all the greatest administrators the world has ever seen, from Atrides king of men, to Ichabod king of school-boys, seemed to have lighted upon her shoulders. She was crystalized in her own dignity, entrenched in it like a toad in his lump of marble; or rather she seemed to possess the same power as the lobster, of secreting from her own substance a complete suit of defensive armor.

"So! you've got back at last!" she exclaimed, as Mary entered the room; "I began to think you never *were* coming."

"I should have been home sooner," replied Mary; "but Dr. Edgerly had to go and visit one of his patients, and I staid to keep his wife company. Do you know, he says Squire Moody is very sick indeed, and he hardly expects him to live through it?"

"Well, well, my dear! it's about time for us old folks to be settling up our affairs for this world. I've been thinking a good deal lately as to what would become of you, if sister and I should both die suddenly; not that there is any immediate probability of such an event happening, for though your Aunt Bethany is rather feeble, I feel myself quite as strong and likely to live twenty years longer as I did twenty

years ago. But life is uncertain, and I should feel a good deal easier, if I could only see you comfortably settled. I have never been married myself, and for that reason may not, perhaps, be so well qualified to judge of such matters as others who have had more experience; but human nature is pretty much the same the world over; and human nature is a subject about which I flatter myself I need no instruction from anybody. If I knew far less than I do, however, it would be easy enough to see that one so helpless as you can never get along in the world without a protector; and so, the long and short of it is, the sooner you're married the better."

"Why, dear aunt! I hope you will never talk of such a thing again! I havn't the least idea of being married; and as for your dying, I won't hear a word about it this hundred years. I'm sure you look as well as anybody, and I can't imagine what can have put such dismal fancies into your head."

"Well, well, it may all be as you say; and, as I said before, I am under no apprehensions myself; but that's no reason you shouldn't be married. I know how it is with you young folks," she continued, with a miserable attempt to be merry; "you think we old people havn't any eyes, and that you can go and fall in love right under our very noses, and we know nothing about it. But I've seen how it was all along, only I thought I wouldn't say any thing about it; but now it's all nicely arranged, you may as well know, as you won't have a bit too much time to get ready."

"What is all arranged? and what is there to get ready? I'm sure I don't understand one word of all you've been saying."

"It's to come on in a fortnight from Thursday. Monday, you know, is washing day; Tuesday we shall have to iron; and it will take all day Wednesday to get ready. Deacon Redwood and I have arranged it between us, and all you have to do is to select your dresses and bridesmaids. A wedding don't happen every day in the year, and when it does come, I'm determined to have a good one."

"Ah! I understand! but, seems to me, a fortnight is a very short time to get ready in; it will take longer than that to make the cake; or do you mean to feast them on

salt and potatoes, as they did at Lydia Johnson's wedding? But who is the bridegroom?"

"It's no matter now; you'll learn that soon enough; it's enough for you to know that he meets with my decided approbation, and that of course he is everyway worthy of you; but I am surprised, my dear, to see you treat so serious a subject with such unbecoming levity. I have never been married myself, but I am too well aware of the responsibility belonging to such a relation not to feel—"

Here Mary, seeing that the latter part of her aunt's sentence had forgot the beginning, kindly came to her relief. "I'm sure I wish you *had* been married, Aunt Rebecca, and then you would never think of marrying two persons against their will; if, indeed, you are really serious in what you say, and not—"

"'Serious!' to be sure I am serious! When, pray, did you ever know me to be any thing else? Deacon Redwood has been in here this evening, to propose a marriage between you and Peter. I knew just how you felt about it; for though I have never been married, I'm not quite so ignorant as you seem to suppose; so I told him it would suit my notions exactly, and that you would feel almost as much gratified as I did myself; so we concluded that the sooner the whole thing was over the better, and there couldn't be a better time than a fortnight from Thursday."

"And he has gone home with that understanding, has he? And I'm to have nothing to say in the matter!"

"'Say!' why, what should you say? Isn't it all nicely arranged, without your having a bit of trouble? Isn't Peter Redwood a good, sober, pious, young man—such as any girl in the village would be glad to get for a husband? I've said all there's any need of saying at present; and all you have to do is to receive him as your lover, and say 'yes' when the minister asks you if you will 'love, serve, and obey him forever.' I'm sure that's easy enough, for you at least; I might object to it myself; but at any rate, it's as easy to say it to him, as to John Moody, that you're in such a high about."

"It's what I never will say to either of them," cried Mary, bursting into tears. "Oh! Aunt Rebecca! how could

you go and say such a thing, when you know I can't bear the sight of him?"

"Why! did one ever see the like! Here's a young man, steady and pious—goes to meeting twice every Sunday, besides the Tuesday evening prayer meetings—is rich and respectable—and yet you can't bear the sight of him! Hasn't he been here night after night, for nobody knows how long, just for nothing else in the world but to see you? and you've just found out you can't bear the sight of him! It shows, I'm afraid, a dreadful wicked heart, not to like such a nice, pious young man as he is. And then to think of the monstrous hypocrisy you've been guilty of all this time! But I see how it is—it's that nasty, good-for-nothing John Moody that's made you get into such a tantrum. But if you can like one, you can like another, and it's nothing, I do believe, but clear sheer obstinacy and ugliness.

"But come, now! tell me all about it—that's a good girl. You do love him, now, don't you? You needn't mind telling me you know, for I know all about these sort o' things, just as well as if I'd been married a hundred times."

"I tell you," cried Mary, "I hate him! I don't want to *be* married. Why *should* I be married any more than you? I'm sure you've got along well enough; and I've heard you laugh at folks for being foolish enough to fall in love, over and over again."

"Oh, no, my dear! you shouldn't say that; you know I never laugh at anybody. I do, to be sure, think it is foolish to fall in love, or else I should have done it myself; I'm sure nobody ever had a better chance; but then few folks have as much discretion on this subject as I, and we must make allowance, especially for the young. That is how I reasoned when I first saw that you had made up your mind to fall in love with somebody or other. I knew it was foolish and silly, and all that; but then, thinks I to myself, it's the way o' the world, and what more can we expect from a young and inexperienced girl? All is, we must try and make the best of it, and see that she doesn't bestow her affections upon some one unworthy of her. But now it's entirely another matter. I've made up my mind that you're to be married, and it would really be a serious disappointment to me if any thing should prevent it. You ought to

feel satisfied that I should do nothing but for your interest. And really! I think you might, by this time, know me well enough to see that I must certainly be the best judge what kind of a man would be most likely to make you happy. Besides, you'll like him well enough after you've lived with him a little while; and it would give me so much pleasure to see you comfortably settled in life, and with a husband of my choosing. Come, now! say you will marry Peter Redwood, if only to oblige me."

"I will do any thing else to please you, but this I cannot do. My mind is fully made up; so I beg you will spare me any further entreaty, and not compel me to repeat what is as painful to me to say as to you to hear."

"Well, then! if that's the way you're going to talk, it's high time we should come to an understanding!"

With these terrible words, Aunt Rebecca first straightened herself up, and then bringing her eyes, nose, mouth, and fore-finger, all to a focus, she inclined slowly forward, exclaiming, as she did so, "I command you to marry Peter Redwood!" then, as if she had made her shot, she added, more in her ordinary manner, "and if you have any regard for my authority, you will make no farther opposition. You have always been a good child; I've been, indeed, not a little proud of you; and I hope you're not going to disgrace your training, now you're grown up."

"My dear aunt! you say I have always been obedient; you ought, then, to excuse me if I choose for once to have my own way. In every thing else I am ready to yield to you; but this is a matter in which I am so much more interested than anybody else, that I am determined to choose for myself. But I know, when you come to think of it, you will see as I do, how cruel and unjust it would be to make me marry anybody I didn't like, to please somebody else. Good night. I can hardly keep my eyes open, and I think I shall have to go to bed."

Aunt Rebecca was too much provoked to make a suitable return to Mary's good nature; she only uttered an inarticulate sound between a grunt and a growl, and rocked more violently than ever. "Silly girl!" she exclaimed, "not to know which side her bread is buttered! Who'd have thought she'd have been so obstinate! But that's

always the way with some people: you try and do any thing for 'em, and, instead of thanking you for it, they're sure to fly off at a tangeon."

So saying, Aunt Rebecca prepared to retire for the night. It was easy to see, from the decided way in which she bustled about among the furniture, that she was in no humor to be trifled with. She set the chairs back against the wall, as if they were about to join hands in matrimony; and when she tucked up the brands under the ashes, she did it with as much gust as if she had been performing the same kind office on a more important occasion. How much harmless heroism has been expended in this way on unresisting matter! It is so soothing, when anyone has offended us, to suppose the guilty party has been transformed into a stool or a broomstick, that we can hale about with impunity. Thus, I once knew an ingenious individual who, "turning his diseases into commodity," beguiled the task of wood-chopping of its weariness by simply imagining that every stick was in reality some bitter enemy, whose head he accordingly split open with the keenest satisfaction. Acting on this well-known principle, Aunt Rebecca stalked grimly through the house, solacing herself by the strict obedience she here exacted, for the mortification arising from Mary's unexpected contumacy.

Mary hoped that she would awake in a more amiable temper, or even that she would have forgotten the subject of their last night's stormy discussion; but this only showed how inadequate a conception she had formed of Aunt Rebecca's character. In the first place, Aunt Rebecca had a memory of that rare order that it retained the most trifling circumstance equally with the most important. Indeed, in her younger days Mary had often thought, that the more trifling the matter the more likely she was to remember it; but if she had possessed that comprehensive wisdom for which Aunt Rebecca was remarkable, she would have seen that nothing is really insignificant to a mind capable of surveying it in all its infinite relations, and that an apple-dumpling may be, under certain conjunctions of circumstances, a more important member of society than an alderman.

It must not be supposed, however, that to-day was but a copy of yesterday. Aunt Rebecca was far too skillful a

strategist for that. Finding that a direct assault had not succeeded, she now changed her tactics, and resolved to prosecute the attack by a slower but surer process. When Mary came down stairs in the morning, she was at once aware that all her hopes had proved fallacious; Aunt Rebecca had neither forgotten nor forgiven; her face was full of sullen determination, and every feature had been thoroughly drilled into a scowl. But Mary was not one to be easily discouraged in what may perhaps be considered more purely a labor of love than any other. She fully appreciated the difficulties of the undertaking, but this only made her all the more determined to set about it. For this purpose she provided herself with a store of the most bewitching little smiles, not too lively, but with a touch of deference about them, by way of sympathy, as one would smile on a friend who had just lost his grandmother. The harder Aunt Rebecca scowled, the more she scattered her smiles around, like a rose-bush when the north wind whirls through its branches.

Besides these, she brought out also, one by one, an almost incredible number of cheerful and obliging phrases, so that it seemed as if Aunt Rebecca, instead of being the ugly dragon she really was, had been some gentle dove, or still more gentle swain, upon whom Mary was thus lavishing the whole art and mystery of love. She made every object, however common, and every incident, however trifling, minister to the same laudable endeavor; and whether she set the table, skimmed the milk, or swept up the hearth, which she did no less than twenty different times, because she knew nothing else could please Aunt Rebecca so well, she did it all with such an engaging, good-humored air as would have made dismal November's dismalest day laugh with contagious glee.

Aunt Rebecca saw all this, and enjoyed it hugely. Not that she had any thoughts of yielding to such gentle wooing—it rather confirmed her purpose; and while Mary was flattering herself that her arts had already produced an impression, Aunt Rebecca was laughing in her sleeve, with most delicious, triumphant scorn, to think how easily she could baffle all such misdirected efforts. It is such a satisfaction, when one has made up his mind to be in a desperate

ill-humor, and has settled comfortably down into it, like a stone in a bog, to have officious kindness try to pull him out. It is so flattering to our pride and vanity to see our dearest friends, those we love the most, tug and labor in vain, we not stirring a foot the while, but simply by our vis inertiæ gravitating deeper and deeper at every touch, till they are at length compelled to give up in despair, and leave us in full and undisputed enjoyment of our own perfected ugliness. But, as extremes meet, and as the brimming cup of pleasure overflows in pain, so Aunt Rebecca's ill humor became at last so excessive, and she enjoyed it so keenly—for she could not remember ever having been so ill-humored before—that she came very near being betrayed into something like cheerfulness. But by this time Mary's smiles were all exhausted, or had gone out, like the stars quenched one by one in a creeping fog; and Aunt Rebecca, fancying herself shamefully ill-used by this withdrawal of her former homage, straightway infused into her demeanor a dash of resignation, as if she had been an injured innocent; and out of the slough, into which she plunged, all the king's oxen could not draw her up.

The state of passive endurance, to which Mary was now reduced, became every moment more oppressive, till she saw no way of safety but by flight. She determined accordingly to take a walk up to Squire Moody's, for she knew he would always be glad to see her, and she was also anxious to know if he were really as sick as Dr. Edgerly had represented. Aunt Rebecca saw her preparations out of the corner of her eye, but was too proud and *stuffy* to seem to see her, or to ask where she was going; so Mary simply observed that she thought she would take a walk before dinner, and hurried away, glad to get off so easily. But her joy was of short duration; for, hardly had she taken two steps down the street, when, raising her eyes, she spied Peter Redwood standing in his father's door.

Peter pretended not to see her till she had almost reached the store, when, suddenly turning, as if aroused by her footsteps, he exclaimed, "Ah! good morning, Mary! is that you? Why! you look as bright and smiling as a basket o' chips! and where are you going now, I'd like to know?"

"I am going up to Squire Moody's; so excuse me, if you please, for I'm in a great hurry."

"Going up to Squire Moody's, are you? Well, I don't care if I go along with you; that is, if you have no objection; and I take it you havn't."

"I'd rather you wouldn't, for I can go very well alone; and I don't want to put you to so much trouble; and they may want you at the store."

"Oh! there's nothing under the sun to do; and the store's as dull as furiation; so I may's well take a run as not. I don't get such a chance as this, you know, every day. But what do you think? I didn't hear any thing about that till this morning. But what's the use o' being in such a tearing hurry? we've got time enough; and I've lots o' things to say to you. What do you think of it, eh?"

"Think of what, Mr. Redwood?"

"'Mr. Redwood!' Why don't you call me Peter? But say, what do you think of it?—this thing between you and me, I mean?"

"I really don't understand you."

"Oh! come now! what's the use of playing 'possum, in that way? You know well enough. What is it that's to come on in a fortnight?"

"Nothing, that I know of."

"Well! that's what I call cutting it a little too fat! Just as if your aunt hadn't told you the whole story! But come, now, don't be so shy and skeery—that's a good girl—but talk right up, just as you used to a'fore we was engaged. Just think! it's only a little more than two weeks, and then!—jolly! I wish 'twasn't more'n two minutes, I swow I do—if I don't, I hope to holler! Well, there's one thing I know; somebody—I won't say who, but he isn't a great ways off—'ll have jist about the slickest and pootiest wife I ever did see."

"Mr. Redwood, I am much obliged to you for your good opinion, and suppose I ought to be very grateful for the honor you have done me, though I cannot make that return you seem to expect. I assure you, that my aunt acted entirely without my knowledge, and if you have been deceived as to the state of my feelings towards you, it has not been through any fault of mine."

"What! do you mean to say that you won't marry me, after all the attentions I've paid you, and after what your aunt said to my father no longer ago than last evening?"

"I am not answerable for any of my aunt's promises. I was never more surprised in my life, than when I heard last evening what she had been doing. As to the attentions you say you have shown me—if you mean by that that I have received them in such a way as to give you any encouragement to—to address me, I can only say that I am not conscious of having intended any such thing, and I am very sorry you should have been so far deceived."

"But you ain't in earnest! You don't mean to say that you refuse me in earnest! You're only joking, I know. Why! there isn't a girl in the village that I couldn't have in a minute, if I wanted to."

"I've no doubt, Mr. Redwood; but I assure you, once more, I am entirely in earnest, and nothing that you can say can alter my determination."

"Well, Miss Mary, I am sorry things should be so cross-grained, and so different from what I expected; but bimeby, perhaps, you'll think better of it, and then—"

"No; I shall always think as I do now. Good morning, sir." And before Peter could frame a reply, she had disappeared within the door of the old farm-house, leaving him standing, flushed and angry, on the lower step.

"Well!" he exclaimed, as he turned away, "if that ain't the most contemptiblest, meanest, sneakingest piece of business I ever had any thing to do with! I've as good a mind as ever I had to eat, to go right straight down to Aunt Rebecca, and tell her so! If it hadn't 'a been for her, things would 'a gone on well enough, I dare say; but the tarnal old fool thinks o' course she knows every thing! I only wish father'd kept quiet; I could 'a managed things a darned sight better myself; but he's so cussed sly, he thought if he didn't have a finger in the pie, 'twouldn't be good for nothing; and a nice, pooty mess he's made of it! I vum, I was never so mad in my life!"

Thus communing with himself, Peter walked fiercely through the village till he came to the store of Peter Redwood and Son; and then advancing to the stove without

taking any notice of his father, who stood behind his desk with pen in hand, as if to take down his story, he exclaimed, "No matter what's the matter! you needn't ask me! You've got me into a nice sort of a fix! havn't you! you that was agoing to manage Aunt Rebecca so finely! May the devil fly away with her, for getting me into such a scrape!"

"What is the trouble?" inquired the deacon, and his cold, damp tones fell on the blaze of Peter's anger like a wet blanket; "I saw you walking off with Mary Grant; has any thing gone wrong to disturb you so seriously?"

"'Gone wrong!' yes, every thing is gone wrong! as bad as it could be! She says she won't marry me, right up and down!—the plaguy little fool! But I'll be even with her yet, one of these days, as sure as a shoemaker begins with wax."

"So, she has really refused you, has she? you are perfectly sure of that? you didn't misunderstand her?"

"'Misunderstand her!' no! Do you take me for a fool? 'Twas as plain as a pike-staff! She up and said, almost the very first thing, she wouldn't marry me, and that Aunt Rebecca hadn't no business to say what she did say; and she'd never given me any encouragement. But she has, though, and she knows it; and all the village knows it; and that's the worst of it—to think I should 'a gone and made such an all-fired fool o' myself, and jes for a little stuck-up midget like her!"

"Never mind what folks think; but tell me how you came to say any thing to her about it. And this morning, too, of all the days in the year!"

"Oh yes, it's mighty easy to talk! You're always telling me, now don't do this, and don't do that; but how could a feller help it, I'd like to know, when she comes right in his way, an' every thing seems to be agoing on as slick as greese? Well, I swow! she's a pooty girl, and no mistake!"

"Well, never mind; it'll all come right in the end; these women are never of the same mind two hours together; you shall marry Mary Grant—I don't say in a month—I never did say that, you know—but all in good time."

"Well, it may all be as you say; but I'd like to know

how on earth you're going to work; you don't expect me to make another offer, I hope?"

"No; not just yet, at any rate; I must first see Aunt Rebecca, and find out from her just how the land lays; I can't believe she would play me false; but here she comes now, just in the nick of time! run and let her in! old ladies, like her, like to be waited on."

"I have been talking with Mary," began Aunt Rebecca, after a short preliminary conversation, "on the subject you mentioned last evening, and I am sorry to say you have been altogether too sanguine about the result. At present, so far from regarding your son with that degree of favor you induced me to suppose, I find her totally averse to the match, and unwilling to yield to my repeated solicitations. She would undoubtedly comply, if I should lay upon her my positive commands; but I am satisfied that this would not be the wisest course until, at least, we have tried what can be done by more gentle means."

"Ah, my dear madam! this is indeed a serious disappointment, I must confess, both to me and to my son; though we have not now heard it for the first time. He has already seen the young lady, and from what he says of her behavior, I should say there was very little hope of her changing her purpose. I did hope, I will allow, that she would have at least a little regard for your wishes; but as she has not, I don't see but what we shall have to let the matter drop. I don't mind it so much myself, for I'm used to being mistaken and being defeated, and if you can bear it, I'm sure I can; but it'll be a new thing, I fancy, for you to meet with such opposition."

"I've no thoughts of bearing it, Deacon Redwood! I can tell you that much for your comfort. I've put my foot down, and ain't a going to take it up till I have things my own way. I only thought, as I was in here, I'd just tell you how things was, so't you needn't be disappointed if things didn't happen quite as soon as you expected. But that's no saying they won't happen sometime or other."

"Certainly not! certainly not! I see now exactly what you'd be at; but, really, I'm delighted to find that you're still of the same mind. I didn't know but what you'd feel like backing out when you found 't every thing didn't go

exactly right; that's the way with most women, you know; there's no depending on 'em for any thing. But I might have known that you were made of different stuff. Well, I confess, I was a little down about this affair; but you've made me all right again; for, to tell the truth, I've that opinion of your talents and ability that I believe you're bound to succeed in every thing you undertake. But now I think of it, I want to ask your advice on a rather delicate question. You know we've always had our conference meeting Tuesday evening. Well, now we've got a new minister, that's been living some time in the city, and he wants to have it Thursday evening, and there's a good many o' the brethren that's disposed to let him have his own way about it. But seems to me, one innovation will only lead the way to another, and there's no knowing where 'twill all end. Now, if you say so too, that'll settle the matter; for there's none of 'em 'll like to go contrary to Miss Rebecca. What's your idea of the matter?"

"Well, Deacon Redwood, my idea is, that we'd better let well-enough alone; for my part, I want to see things go on in the good old-fashioned way. The next thing we know, they'll be for putting Sunday in the middle o' the week, and then I'd like to know what we should have to go by?"

"True, as you say, we should never know what to depend on. But I'm glad you think as I do about it, for now there'll be no further trouble. I am really more obliged to you, Miss Rebecca, than your modesty will permit you to allow. Good morning."

We left Mary just entering the door at Squire Moody's. She had not yet recovered from the excitement into which she had been thrown by her conversation with Peter when she found herself in the sick-room. Squire Moody was lying with his face to the window, and his head supported by pillows, that he might look once more on that glorious creation which was soon to be shut forever from his eyes. His silvery hair, combed back from his high white forehead, gave a peculiar dignity to a countenance that seemed already to have caught the first faint blush of the dawn of an eternal day.

"Ah, my little tricksy-wicksy!" he exclaimed, "so you have come to see your poor old uncle once more, before he

dies. It seems only yesterday that you were a little dot of a thing, hardly higher than that table; and it will be only a few days, and you will find yourself where I am now. But you must come and see my old woman, after I'm gone, for she'll feel sort o' lonesome to be left all alone in the old house, with nobody but Susy, after we've lived together so many years.

"Forty years ago! that seems a long time to you, but it's nothing to me. I see it now, so near, as if I could almost lay my hand upon it. I remember one evening, in particular; it was Sunday; it had been raining, and we had a little fire, though 'twas early in June; we were sitting together on the settee—the same one that's down stairs now; and Susan—not this Susan, but her mother—had the cat in her lap; when all at once it came into my head that I'd never heard her age—not the cat's, but Susan's—though we'd been engaged nearly a year, and were to be married in a month. She laughed when I asked her, and said I was a saucy fellow, and she was a good mind not to tell me a word about it; but after a while she whispered in my ear, as if she'd been afraid the old clock would hear, that her birthday came the 13th of Januarv, and that she was in her eighteenth year. Then I told her that mine came the 12th of December, and I was just a year and a month and a day older than she. We both thought it was very queer and entertaining, like every thing else in those days. She was then only a little older than you are now, but a good deal larger: her father was one of the strongest men in town, and they used to say he could throw a barrel of flour over his head without hurting himself in the least."

"But come nearer, Mary! I want to feel your hand in mine; ah! how small and soft it is! and yet it is stronger than my whole body. But tell me, Mary! how is Aunt Rebecca? she and I haven't been on very good terms lately; she feels a little sore about that good-for-nothing old pulpit; but it's time for us to forgive and forget all these little difficulties. I wish you'd ask her to come up and see me; her turn will come pretty soon, and then she'll be sorry that she hadn't made all square. I've always had a liking for the old lady, though she is a little odd and notional sometimes.

I've always felt she meant to do about right, and that's the main thing, you know."

The old man seemed exhausted by this long speech, though uttered in a very low tone, and with frequent pauses; during which Mary was too much affected to speak. She now carefully smoothed his pillows and bathed his burning temples.

"Ah!" he murmured, "it is almost worth while to be sick, if one can have an angel for his nurse. But can't you read to me, Mary? you know I always liked to hear you read, better than anybody else."

Mary opened the big Bible that lay on the table, and read the 14th of John. Her voice trembled at first, so that she could hardly go on; but she gathered strength as she proceeded, and by the time she finished the chapter, no one would have remarked any unusual emotion. Squire Moody thanked her with a smile, and soon after fell into a quiet slumber. Mary sat a few minutes by his bed-side, and then stole softly down stairs. Mrs. Moody was waiting for her in the old familiar kitchen; it was the same room that had always been so pleasant, and Mary wondered what made it seem so cheerless and gloomy. One by one, the children of the house had departed, till now the youngest only was left.

From the upper windows of the old farm-house, Squire Moody could see the smoke of the chimneys of seven of his sons and daughters; a sight that, as he often declared, gave him more pride and pleasure than if they had been seated on all the thrones of Europe. Twice every year, on New Years and Thanksgiving, all assembled under the ancestral roof, where five generations of Moodys had already observed the same time-honored festivals. On the last occasion of the sort, Grandpa Moody and his buxom partner had had the satisfaction of seeing no less than sixty of their children and grandchildren seated round the well-filled tables. Edmund, the eldest son, had come all the way from Boston, with his wife and eight children, to gratify the earnest longing of his father, who even then felt a settled presentiment that that Thanksgiving would be the last. He was still, however, hale and vigorous, and his children fondly imagined that his fears would prove unfounded, and that he

would yet live to see many returns of the same joyful occasion. Even now, though the doctor gave no hopes of his recovery, his wife could not, or would not, apprehend the full extent of the danger.

"How does he seem to you, dear?" she inquired, cheerfully, as Mary entered the kitchen; "I thought this morning he was a good deal stronger; but the doctor has been here, and said so much to frighten me, that I can't help feeling sort o' anxious and worried like."

"I don't wonder, for I think he is very sick indeed."

"But tell me—you don't think he's really dangerous, do you?"

"Oh, I don't believe he'll ever get well in this world; and I don't know what we shall do without him."

"Why, Mary, dear, now don't take on so! pray, don't! perhaps, after all, it isn't so bad as you suppose; and at any rate, crying will only make it worse. Come, now, I want you to stay and take dinner with me and Susy, and spend the day, and after supper John shall take you home in the sleigh. He'll be right glad o' the chance, I know."

"Oh, no; I don't feel as if I should ever want to eat any thing again; but I will come up to-morrow and stay all day, if you'd like to have me."

"Well, now, so do—that's a real good girl; you can't think how lonesome I do feel, with nobody at home only just Susy—and she, poor thing, is a'most sick herself, with taking care of her father. Well, he's been a good father, and deserves all his children can do for him, if ever a father did. But you'll be sure, now, and come to-morrow? Mind! I shall be dreadfully disappointed if you don't. And come early as you can, for I want to have one of our real nice, cozy chats, you know."

Mary promised once more to come as soon as possible, and then bid Mrs. Moody a hearty good-bye. She walked along, lost in thought on the scenes she had just quitted, and had almost reached home, when she was surprised to see a well-dressed stranger just coming out of Deacon Redwood's store. This was so unusual an occurrence in that quiet village, that we cannot wonder that Mary's thoughts were for a time diverted from their former channel, nor that her curiosity was at once aroused to discover a solution of

the mystery. The stranger, on his part, no sooner saw her approaching than he appeared to regard her with even greater interest, and, as he passed, directed at her such a cool and deliberate gaze that she could not help blushing with mingled anger and confusion. He was tall and slender; his hair and whiskers were very black and very abundant; his expression bold and careless, but neither frank nor good-humored. His left hand was thrust deep into the pocket of his sack, which was made of the finest broadcloth, and fastened with a single button; and in the right he held a cane, still more slender than himself, with which, from time to time he maliciously beat the little bits of ice and snow that were unfortunate enough to come in his way. His age seemed about thirty-five or forty; his linen was immaculate, but his vest was somewhat soiled and rumpled, especially about the pockets, where he apparently had a habit of carrying his thumbs in warmer weather.

We mention all these particulars, not because they have any especial bearing upon the story, but to show the quickness and minute accuracy of Mary's observation, since she detected them all, and many others, in the brief moment that her eyes were fixed upon the stranger. But besides these more obvious peculiarities, there was an indefinable something that produced the impression that she had seen the same face before; but whether in a dream or in actual presence, she was unable to determine. The mysterious stranger haunted her imagination, at intervals, all the rest of the day; but the next morning, other and more absorbing interests left her no time to return to this restless and tormenting fancy.

Mary was not the only one in the village whose curiosity had been excited by this sudden apparition. Squire Buckle, from the dull, bleary window of his dingy office, had espied the presence of a stranger in the streets of Totemwell, and leaving at once the half-finished bird-cage, to which he had devoted his leisure—that is, some ten hours a day—for the last three weeks, he sallied forth with the laudable purpose of acquiring as much miscellaneous information as possible on all points connected with the late arrival.

"Perhaps," he thought, "the gentleman is trying to find my office! who knows but what he has an important case

to come on at the next term of the court, and wants to secure my services. Or perhaps he has come to inform me of my appointment to some office or other! I don't much care what, so it only pays well; clerk o' the court! or even judge! such things *have* happened. Judge Buckle! that wouldn't sound bad, and my wife 'ould be tickled almost to death; she's forever dunning it in my ears that I've no ambition, and 'll never be any thing but a mere country lawyer; I wonder what she'll say now!!!"

While he thus glanced along the railway track of possible good fortune, and bewildered himself with the fertility of his own creations, a new actor appeared upon the scene.

"Ah! there's that devilish"—we beg the squire's pardon for the word, it was really only his thought—"old fox, Totling! he's always in the way if I'm going to do any thing; if it hadn't been for him, I should ha' been elected to the Legislature five years ago; and now he'll come it over this fellow with his soft sawdre, and I shan't have a chance to get a word in edgeways. Ah! there he goes into Deacon Redwood's store! what's he after there, I wonder!"

While the worthy squire thus rhapsodized, he had descended his narrow stairway, and walked half across the street. Colonel Totling had no farther advantage than what he obtained by being already on the ground floor. He had discovered the stranger at the same moment as his rival, and had in like manner left the business in which he was then occupied—and which was neither more nor less than whittling out a spigot for a barrel of vinegar—for a pursuit more worthy his high and magnanimous temper. He had no doubt that the distinguished stranger, if he intended to remain for even a day in Totemwell, would naturally feel anxious to make the acquaintance of the only man in the village who was in any degree familiar with the great world from which he had wandered. Besides Colonel Totling, as well as the squire, had his eyes open to any possible benefit he might derive from such an incident, with this advantage, that with him thought and action were synonymous, or at least inseparable.

But by this time Colonel Totling had crossed the street and entered the store. To his great surprise, he found no one there but the deacon, who sat perched on his tall stool,

his feet drawn up onto the topmost round, and from that imposing elevation reviewed with Napoleonic eye the long rows of figures that straggled up and down the blotted page of his ledger. He was so completely absorbed in this interesting occupation, that the entrance of the colonel failed to arouse him; but, as we have already had occasion to mention, though the great object of that gentleman's ambition was to make a noise in the world, it was by no means of the sort implied by the slamming of doors, the stamping of feet, or any such vulgar demonstration. On the contrary, he came in so quietly, that unless one were watching with the closest attention, he could hardly tell whether the door opened at all. The whole process was a piece of legerdemain, worthy of Professor Anderson or Signor Blitz, or of those more benevolent performers who make it their whole business to amuse strangers in the great metropolis with their miraculous ball and thimble. How Colonel Totling ever passed through a door all at once, without leaving half of himself on the outside, was certainly quite as great a mystery. It must be a sharp wind that could squeeze in with him, for he fitted into the opening as snugly as a valve in an air-pump, or a cork in a bottle.

Having thus slid, or insinuated himself into the store, not with noisy pop or sudden explosion, but rather like a tallow candle slipping out of its mold, the colonel walked across the floor as softly as a soap-bubble rolling over a Turkey carpet; and as he walked, he looked to the right and left, looked high and low; but naught spied he, save the deacon bending over his ledger, a broom and a mop-stick kissing in a corner, a slobbering molasses barrel, sleeping like Polyphemus, a Dutch alderman, or a crocodile, with its mouth wide open, and an endless variety of similar articles, the history of which would be the history of the whole nineteenth century.

"Morning, Deacon!" said the colonel, as he took his station in front of the desk, "you seem to be as busy as a bee in a tar-barrel."

"Ah Colonel! good morning!" cried the other, sliding his finger to the bottom of the column, and then stretching himself with the air of a man who has been in the same

position for hours. "I was just making out an account; but what 'll you have this morning? are you looking after axes? I've a prime lot just from the manufacturer—first-rate stuff they are too!"

Meanwhile Squire Buckle had also entered the store, where looking carefully in every corner, he proceeded to open, one by one, the barrels of sugar, pork, and flour that were drawn up in front of the counter, and to peer in among bags of coffee, boxes of soap and raisins, and piles of cod-fish, wherever there was room for a corpulent rat to bestow himself. A row of boots next attracted his attention; and taking them up, one after the other, he gravely turned them upside down, and gave them a thorough shaking, as one would do who had been walking ten or twenty miles with a conscientious pebble vexing his sole.

"Well, Squire!" at length said the deacon, "what is't you're looking for?"

"Oh! I'm looking after a tall man, with a shiny hat and brown surtout, that came in that door about four minutes and a half ago, that the colonel here wants to see tremendously; but where the mischief have you stowed him? one might as well look for a needle in a hay-mow as tip over all these traps!"

"Did you say the colonel wished to see him?"

"To be sure he does! what else should he be over here for, I wonder! you don't suppose he came to buy those axes, do you?"

"Well really! I'm very sorry I hadn't known it sooner," cried the deacon, before the colonel could speak, "but I'm afraid you're too late. I shall see him again, however, in the course of the day, and I'll tell him you'd like to see him before he leaves town."

"Where is he now?" said Squire Buckle.

"Hm! I didn't notice exactly which way he *did* go; but 'twouldn't be at all surprising if he'd gone to take a walk up the river road."

"I didn't know," said Colonel Totling, "but I might have met the gentleman in some of my frequent visits to the city; and if so, 'twouldn't be any more than polite for me to call."

"Certainly not! but I hardly think he has any acquaintance in Totemwell, except myself."

"Where'd you say he was from?" said Squire Buckle.

"I believe he hails from Boston."

"And what's his name?"

"He writes it Burnside, I think, Thomas Burnside."

"And what's he here for?"

"He's here on business. I shouldn't wonder between you and me, but I hope you won't say any thing about it, if he was to take hold of the falls."

"Ah! well, that *would* be news! 'twould be the best thing for Totemwell that has happened this many a day!"

"Yes! if he's the right sort of man!" said Colonel Totling. "I should really like to talk with him about that! I think I could show him the capabilities of the place so clearly that he wouldn't hesitate for an instant."

"He won't do any thing about it at present; but when he does, I've no doubt he will be careful to consult you first."

"You don't know how soon he'll be back?"

"Yes! he will certainly be back in an hour or two; and if you happen to drop in then, he might be glad to see you."

"Very well! I will endeavor to do so; but if any thing should prevent, I wish you would say to him, that I intend to do myself the honor of calling upon him in the course of a few days. He has probably heard of Colonel Totling; and if he has not, I can introduce myself; a man who has been in public life as much as I have, has a sort of prescriptive right, you know, in such matters."

"Certainly! certainly! though it would be strange indeed, if he had not heard of Colonel Totling. I am quite confident he has heard your name more than once, and would undoubtedly be proud to make your acquaintance."

"Well Colonel!" cried Squire Buckle, as the two distinguished men of Totemwell returned to their respective employments, "we didn't make much out o' that, I'm thinking; the deacon knows a thing or two, and for my part, I don't more'n half believe that long rinctum he told us about the falls, and the mills, and all that."

"Why! if Deacon Redwood or any other man, thinks

he can throw dust in my eyes, I am perfectly willing he should make the attempt, but I don't believe he'd make a great deal by the operation. I see nothing so very improbable in his story; persons have often been here to look at the falls" ("and gone away again," said the squire); "but, at any rate, I intend to call and see for myself."

"So do! and you can see for me at the same time; but say, Colonel, you can just give him my respects, and say I would ha' called too, only I thought one would just do as well; but wouldn't you like to have me give you a letter of introduction? Seems to me it 'll be a pesky awkward piece o' business without something o' the sort; and then, you know, if he asks who wrote it, you can say, It was my distinguished fellow-citizen, Mr. Moses Buckle, Esquire. There's an idea for you; you give me a boost, and I'll give you, and so up we'll go together to the top of the ladder. He! he! he!"

"I am much obliged to you for your offer, and if you had any acquaintance with the gentleman yourself, I might feel inclined to accept it; but as it is, I don't see any particular benefit I should derive from it."

"Very well; all right. I glory in your spunk: go a-head, hit or miss; but, remember! Totemwell looks to you to see that her dignity does not suffer in your hands. From the top of yonder sign-post, forty ages behold you."

"I believe I know what I am about; at any rate, whatever I do, I trust I shall have too much regard for my own dignity to do any thing of which Totemwell need be ashamed. The honor of my native place is as dear to me as my own;" and with this patriotic sentiment, the colonel sidled into his store, where he lost no time in telling the whole story to a small but select party of listeners, who were busily warming their fingers round the stove.

While he was thus employed, and all were curiously speculating on the probable consequences of the stranger's visit, he himself was engaged in an earnest and somewhat angry discussion with Deacon Redwood. Hardly had the colonel and squire left the store, when a shiny black hat slowly rose from behind the counter, a pair of piercing black eyes followed, and after them the head and shoulders with which they were in partnership.

"Well, Deacon, you managed that capitally, I swear; you ought to have been born the other side o' the water; you'd have made an invaluable negotiator. How that Colonel Todling or Jobling would have stared if he suddenly saw me starting up at once from behind the counter when he thought I was taking that pleasant walk along the river! but how is the stock now in the Totemwell Manufacturing Company? I don't know but what I'd like to take a few shares myself."

"But after all," replied the deacon, smiling faintly, "I don't see what advantage we have gained by this unnecessary concealment. My maxim is always to do a thing openly, unless there is some reason for doing otherwise. In fact the greatest boldness is often the greatest caution."

"And be bored to death by that empty noddlehead of a colonel! No, I thank you, I did not come all the way from New York for that. I prefer lurking under the counter to enduring any such infliction."

"And what would you have done if he had gone behind the counter, as I was afraid every moment they would?"

"What would I have done! why, turned it off as a capital joke, to be sure! suddenly remembered that I had met the honorable colonel somewhere, no matter where; and ended by inviting him to call on me if he ever found himself in Boston. D—me, if I don't wish I had done it—just for the fun o' the thing. Ha! ha! you should have seen those prying rascals at the tavern last evening; as soon as I had written my name, T. Burnside, Boston, you know," and here the said Burnside punched the deacon facetiously under the ribs, "they all hurried up to read it over each other's shoulders; and when they found I was from Boston, they grew wonderfully respectful, and let me have a good large half of the fire to myself. But, to come to business, you tell me that this Mary Grant—"

But at this moment the heavy door once more creaked on its hinges, and Mr. Burnside again dodged down behind the counter, where we will leave him for the present, in company with a pile of old papers, an oil-can, and a very ancient slipper, the last of which, seeing that he looked like a gentleman, began, in a thick husky voice, to tell him a long rigmarole about the various fortunes she had met with,—how

she had once moved in the best society, but had afterwards lost her husband, her health, and, worst of all, her beauty, and was now compelled to mix with the outcasts of creation. All these things we shall, perhaps, relate hereafter.

Before the day was over, the report was bruited from one end of Totemwell to the other, that a wealthy capitalist had just arrived in the village, with the intention of purchasing the water power of the Little Trebec and erecting a bigger factory than any that Stratton Four Corners could boast of. The excitement produced by this announcement was prodigious. Every man, woman, and child in Totemwell seemed about to burst out into a laugh, or else oppressed with the sense of coming dignity and importance. The holders of land near the favored locality walked about with their hands in their pockets, as if they thoroughly knew their value and were not to be bought for a song. Everybody was afraid they would ask too much, and in that way prevent the bargain. An immense deal was said about public spirit, consulting their true interests, the rise of real estate, and the increase of property. There was some talk about establishing a newspaper and laying out a wooden sidewalk from the meeting-house to the post-office. Everybody was full of stocks and dams and spindles, flumes, canals, railroads, new stores, new streets, new everything. Everybody commended Colonel Totling's public spirit, because he wore a new hat the next Sunday, because he said that he didn't intend to sell tea and sugar by the cent's worth any longer, and because he declared that, if he owned the land near the falls, he would rather give it away for nothing than not have the factory. There is no knowing how much farther the matter would have gone, if Deacon Redwood had not at length announced that Mr. Burnside had entirely abandoned the scheme, not for any want of faith, however, in the capabilities of the Little Trebec, but because he had other uses for his money; whereupon the hubbub gradually subsided, and Totemwell fell again to sleep.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW ACTOR COMES UPON THE STAGE.

Aunt Rebecca received Mary with greater kindness than might have been expected from the temper she had displayed in the morning, and listened with considerable interest to her account of her visit at Squire Moody's, interrupted only by an occasional "humph!" But when Mary came at last to tell her of the squire's wish to see her once more before he died, Aunt Rebecca burst out in the most virtuous indignation. She wondered the squire should ask her to visit him after what had happened, unless, indeed, he wished to obtain her forgiveness for his unchristian conduct; and really she didn't know whether, supposing he should ask her pardon, it would be right for her to grant it. She would pray, however, that he might obtain that forgiveness of which he stood in so much need; and that, she thought, would perhaps be productive of quite as much good as a personal interview.

The next morning, however, when Mary prepared to make her promised visit, Aunt Rebecca rather stiffly signified her intention of accompanying her. Mary was not at all surprised by this apparent change of purpose, for this was the way usually chosen by that astute lady to manifest her own independence and superiority.

Squire Moody was evidently failing fast. He could no longer bear the partially upright position in which he had been the day before; his eyes were dim, and he could hardly speak above a whisper. If Aunt Rebecca felt any emotion at sight of her old enemy now reduced to such sad extremity, there was no indication of it in her granite face. She gazed at him a few moments without speaking, and then sat down at some distance from the bed. Mary took her accustomed seat by his side, and, bending down her

head, whispered, "I have brought Aunt Rebecca with me, dear Uncle, to see you, and she is here now."

"Here in this room! I don't see her, where is she?"

"Here she is, Uncle! just between you and the window."

"Yes!" repeated Aunt Rebecca, "I am here according to your request, and waiting to hear what you have to say. You must be quick, for my time is precious, and I must be going."

"Going!" slowly replied the old man, "yes, we must all be going! our time is all precious, especially when we have so little of it remaining. I have sent for you, Mrs. Rebecca, because I thought perhaps you might think hardly of me on account of one or two little things, where we've happened to differ, and I thought, I don't know, but perhaps I haven't always been so forbearing as I should have been. I'm naturally rather quick tempered, you know, and I dare say I've sometimes said rather more than I meant. However, whether it's more or less, I am ready to ask your forgiveness, for I am going where I have no further need of pride or vanity, and the less of them I carry with me, the richer I shall be. And I hope you will consider well how you act in this matter, for your time will come next. I don't know how it is, myself; but I feel sure you will not survive me more than a week."

"Well, Squire Moody! though, for my part, I've no faith in such superstitious fancies, yet there's no knowing what may happen; but, whenever my time does come, whether it's next week or next month or next year, I trust I shall be ready. But you had much better be employed in thinking over the sins of your past life, and humbling yourself in the sight of God, than dwelling upon such unprofitable subjects! You must know that you have lived a dreadfully irreligious life, and have many sins to answer for beside your trespasses against me."

"Yes! yes! I know we are all sinners, unworthy sinners, and I am one of the chief; but I trust I have found the way of escape."

"Then, Squire Moody! I'm afraid you're awfully deceived. After living such a life as you have done for sixty

years, how can you expect to find mercy so easily? You know what the Bible says on this very subject, 'How hardly shall they'—"

"Dear Aunt, how can you talk so, at such a time, when you see he has only a few hours to live?"

"Child! would you have me fail to perform my duty as a member of Christ's church, whatever may be the consequences? Suppose he *is* dying! is that any reason he should not be warned of his dreadful condition? No; Squire Moody, you are deceiving yourself, most fatally deceiving yourself! You—"

But here she was arrested by the fearful change that came over the dying man. Susan Moody, who was in the room, ran hastily to call her mother; and soon the whole family, who had already been sent for in anticipation of the sad event, were assembled round the bed.

"My children!" murmured the old man, "the hand of God is upon me; I feel that I am dying. Mary, when—" He said no more on earth, his body lay in the darkened chamber; but the soul that had stirred and warmed it, had flown lightly and noiselessly away. Mrs. Moody wrung her hands and wept. The married sons and daughters looked sadly in the faces of their wives and husbands, with a far-reaching, anticipative grief. Susan alone mourned her loss with a single, uncomparative sorrow.

Aunt Rebecca departed without being noticed. She was a little indignant that Squire Moody had been so uncivil as to die while she was speaking, but consoled herself with the reflection that it was just like him, and that she had done her duty at all events.

Loving neighbors were not wanting to "smooth the careful shroud," and perform the last sad offices of humanity, and when Mary at last took her departure, amid the grateful thanks of the whole family, interrupted only by Susan's sobs, whose grief now burst forth afresh, but little more remained to be done in preparation for the funeral. This took place the third day after, and plainly declared the universal love and esteem which Squire Moody's sincere virtues had commanded from all who knew him. Never had so numerous a procession passed through the streets of Totemwell since the day—nearly fifty years before—when his father had led a like triumphal march.

"Ah!" said Colonel Totling, "a very fair procession! well, mine will be as long as that! what a pity 'tis that I shan't live to see it?"

Aunt Rebecca was the only one of our acquaintance who was absent on this occasion. She had taken a slight cold the day she called at Squire Moody's, and did not feel well enough to attend the funeral. The next morning when Aunt Bethany came down to breakfast, she told Mary that her sister was quite unwell, and would not leave her room.

"But don't worry, dear!" she added, "it's only a little bit of a turn, and she'll be as well as ever to-morrow."

Mary's fears were not so easily quieted; and as soon as breakfast was over, she hastened to Dr. Edgerly, and begged him to come and see her aunt without delay.

"I shouldn't feel so anxious," she added, "but you know Aunt Rebecca is one of that sort that are never sick if they can possibly help it; and besides, I am almost ashamed to tell you, but I can't help thinking of something Squire Moody said to her a short time before he died."

"What was it?" inquired the doctor.

"Why, he told her that she wouldn't survive him a week. He did not give any reason for thinking so, but said it came to him all at once, and he couldn't feel easy till he had told her of it."

"And did she seem to place any faith in his prediction?"

"She said that she hadn't the least faith in the world; but it seems to me she has been different ever since; I don't know how exactly, not dull or melancholy, but as if she were thinking of something."

Aunt Rebecca, even in her sick room, had not laid aside any of the dignity that hedged her person. Her hair was arranged with even more than her usual precision: the smooth surface of the bedquilt was not broken by a single ripple, and her hands were folded decently upon her breast. An Indian at the stake could not have borne his agonies with greater fortitude; the moisture on her brow and the nervous pressure of her lips were the only indications of the severity of her sufferings, for her proud and stubborn soul gave the lie to her feeble body. She seemed surprised at seeing the doctor, but made no objection to his presence. In

answer to his inquiries, she allowed that she did indeed suffer severely, but no more, she supposed, than many others, and no more than every one must naturally expect in this world of pain and trouble.

"If there's any thing in this world I abominate," she exclaimed, with as much strength as she could muster, "it is to see anyone, the moment they feel a little mite sick, go to fretting and complaining as if nobody had ever known any thing like it before, and they were the most unfortunate creatures that ever lived. I always wonder what such folks think this world was meant for."

"Well, perhaps you are right," said the doctor, "but, I'm afraid it will fatigue you to talk, and you'd better keep as quiet as possible. I will send over some medicine that I think will relieve your pain, that is if you have no conscientious scruples about taking it."

"Hush!" whispered Mary, "don't, I beg of you, go to putting any such notions into her head! you send the medicine, and I will see that she takes it; but do you think she is in any danger?"

"Not unless her imagination is affected by that unlucky speech of Squire Moody's. She has symptoms of a fever, arising from checked perspiration, and may possibly be confined to her own room for several weeks; but her constitution is of iron and will withstand almost any shock. Her sufferings are unusually severe, yet you see her tranquillity; it is a pity, too, for it would be a great relief if she would only groan or toss a little, but that is a sacrifice we have no right to expect. Ah, well! it's exceedingly unfortunate that she never had a chance to be a martyr! she certainly possesses greater talents for that business than anyone I ever met with!"

Either Dr. Edgerly was too sanguine in his anticipations or Farmer Moody's warning had made a deeper impression on Aunt Rebecca than she was willing to allow. The disease gained rapidly upon her, and it soon became evident that, unless a speedy change should take place for the better, her days on earth were nearly numbered. Yet, even then, she thought not of herself, but was anxious simply for those she left behind. The Madagascar Sewing Circle, how *could* it get along without her? who *could* be found to fill her

place! and how could Totemwell possibly survive such a calamity?

This is, I apprehend, a very natural mistake, and one common to nearly all great men and women, who are very apt to imagine that their death will be like the loss of a limb to the body politic, whereas it is often felt no more sensibly than the cutting of the hair or the paring of one's nails. Deacon Redwood, however, in this instance, fully sympathized with Aunt Rebecca; and he no sooner heard of her sickness than he hastened to offer such ghostly aid and consolation as he thought most suitable to her situation.

"Ah, my dear friend!" was his first salutation, "I cannot tell you how concerned I am to see you thus, when all the while I supposed you in perfect health. I have only just heard of your illness; and though we had to-day an unusual amount of business to attend to, I thought I must run in a few minutes at least to see how you are getting along."

"Thank you!" replied Aunt Rebecca, "I am not so well as I could wish to be, especially for the sake of my friends; but it is our duty to submit."

"Yes!" replied the deacon, "it is only through submission that we obtain those blessings that are the rich and peculiar fruits of affliction; and I rejoice to find you in such a happy and devout frame. This is precisely what I should have expected from that Christian fortitude and resignation which you have displayed on so many similar occasions. My wife, when she found I was coming, advised me to stay at home to-day, and finish my business; 'for to-morrow,' says she, 'will do just as well to visit Mrs. Rebecca;' but I told her that I would not for the world miss the opportunity of beholding such an example of faith and patience as I was sure your sick bed would exhibit. 'She has been all her life,' said I, 'remarkable for her firm, consistent, self-denying conduct, and I don't believe, whatever others may say, that she will give up her principles now. She will be the same in sickness as in health, ready to sacrifice every thing, ease, comfort, life itself, to her delicate sense of duty. And if necessary, she will not even regard the feelings or opinions of others, if they interfere with any course of conduct pointed out by conscience and reason.' Those were my

very words, and I want you to say whether I was right or wrong."

"It does not become me," replied Aunt Rebecca, "to say how far you were right; but there is one thing I *can* say, and that is, it has always been my aim and purpose to live such a life as you describe; how far I have been successful, others must judge. But one thing I am sure of, if I have failed, it has not been for want of trying."

"No indeed! I can answer for that, but alas! how sad it is to see one possessed of such large, comprehensive, and eminently Christian views thus cut off in the midst of her days, with her plans of usefulness unaccomplished, and the good she had intended lost and forgotten! Where shall we look to find a successor fit to carry out her noble purposes, and complete the glorious work that was too great almost even for her iron energy and will? Excuse my abstraction, my dear friend! my feelings well nigh overpowered me when I thought of the loss which I, in common with the whole church, was about to sustain. But let us for a moment forget the general grief, and talk of what more nearly concerns us as individuals. This marriage between Mary and my son, you will excuse my introducing it on this occasion, but I cannot tell when I may have another opportunity, and I know you have too much firmness of purpose, too much steadfastness of heart and understanding, to forget any thing in which you have ever been interested, or to neglect it on account of any bodily infirmity.' I suppose you will let the whole matter drop, and consider this as one of the many purposes which your illness has interrupted. I told my son before I came over here, that he might as well give up all hope. 'If Mrs. Rebecca's life should be spared' said I, 'mountains and seas cannot keep you asunder; but if Providence should appoint otherwise, all *we* can do is absolutely nothing. It will be as it has always been before. Great and good men die, and their warnings and counsels are at once forgotten.' 'Very true,' replied the poor fellow, 'but Mrs Rebecca might if she chose, exact a promise from Mary to grant her this one favor; if she loves her as much as she pretends, she could not refuse her so small a thing as that, and on her dying bed too.' 'You musn't think of it,' I replied, 'it would do very well if Mrs. Rebecca had her usual health and strength; but

sick as she is, she will never have sufficient resolution to go through such a painful business. No! she has done all we have any right to expect, and you may as well resign yourself to the disappointment of all the hopes her promise had excited. You can now make up your mind to see her united to John Moody."

"Never! never shall he or any one else see a child of mine, though only by adoption, married to a Moody. No! I have said she should marry your son, and I say so still; and she shall promise me to marry him before she is a day older. I thank Heaven I'm not so weak as all that comes to, to be afraid of a puling girl. Go, and send her to me now: my body may be weak, but my mind is as strong as ever; and if I must die, I will die as I have lived!"

"*I* dare not oppose your will at any rate, it remains to be seen whether Mary will be more obstinate. But spare yourself, I pray you! perhaps after all it would be better—no, not better—wiser to yield."

Aunt Rebecca frowned and shook her head, and he went. At the foot of the stairs he met Aunt Bethany—"Your sister wished me to ask Mary as I went out, to come to her. You had better not tell her I have been here, as it might alarm her; but to you I need not hesitate to say that I think Mrs. Rebecca in an exceedingly critical situation. If she recovers, it will be hardly short of a miracle."

Poor Aunt Bethany lifted up her hands in unfeigned sorrow and amazement. "Sakes alive! oh Lordy!" she exclaimed, bursting into the kitchen where Mary was busy preparing some delicacy to tempt the peevish palate of Aunt Rebecca, "Deacon Redwood has just been here, and he says Sister Rebecca's in the most critical condition, and she won't never get well, he don't believe. Oh dear me! I never! to think she should go and die afore me! and after she'd lived so long! I never see the like! but run Mary, and see what she wants, some cold water, mebbe, or a mess o' gruel. Well! well! we're all mortal; but I never rightly thought she'd die, and afore me: that's the strangest of it! I'm such a poor, feeble, little body! and o' no use to anybody, and she so splendid and inferential!" and the poor, feeble, little Bethany wiped her eyes on the cleanest check of her apron, and sat down to think once more of the time, long years ago, when

she lost her poor dear Joshua; and the little bunches of flowers on the wall seemed to fashion themselves into merry faces, now full of wondering sympathy, and the doors of the cupboard she had opened so often, and the square tiles in the hearth, with whose geography she was so familiar, and the crane, and the pothooks, and the shovel she used to parch corn on;—what a crowd of recollections came to hold brief but cheery thanksgiving in the same old sunshiny heart where they had their birth!

Mary made haste and carried her calves foot jelly, transparent as amber, up into her aunt's chamber. "I declare!" she said to herself, "it looks almost too good to eat;" and so it did, brimful of imprisoned light. "I hope Aunt Rebecca will like it; if she doesn't I can't think of any thing else to make."

"Ah yes!" said Aunt Rebecca, grimly smiling, "that looks very nice! I will eat some of it by and by; but I shan't trouble you much longer Mary, you won't have a chance to do a great deal more for Aunt Rebecca: the doctor, to be sure, thinks I'm in no danger, but I know better. You needn't look so startled and frightened about it; other folks have died as good as I, and I can't expect to live forever. All is, we must be ready to go when we are called. But I have a few words to say to you, and must say them now, before my strength is entirely exhausted. Tell me! have I not always done all in my power to promote your happiness?"

"Oh yes!" replied Mary, faintly, and with a shuddering presentiment of evil.

"Have I ever refused you any thing that I thought would be for your advantage, or commanded you to do any thing except for your own good?

"Well then! why should you refuse to trust me further? my experience and judgment are certainly superior to yours, and I must be far more capable of deciding what sort of a husband would be most likely to make you happy. If I were young myself, and disposed to marry, I should not hesitate an instant to give the preference to Peter Redwood, over all the other young men in Tottemwell; and surely! I hope you're not weak and vain enough to think he's not good enough for you!"

"Oh no! dear Aunt! I dare say he is altogether too good

for me; but I don't love him, and I never can marry a man I don't love."

"Fiddlestick! how absurdly you talk—I really didn't suppose any person of sense could be so ignorant about such matters. How can you expect to love him until you know him better, and how are you ever to know him before you're married?"

"I don't want to know him better! I know him well enough already, and the more I know him, the less I like him."

"Don't tell me! but pray how old are you?"

"Almost nineteen."

"And how old do you suppose I am?"

"Sixty-three."

"Oh! I am! am I? I began to think it must be just the other way—but I should like to have you tell me, if you can, what you suppose I've lived for all my life, if I can't advise you on so simple a matter as this. Why! I might just as well been kept always in bib and tucker! When I advise you to take a young man for a husband, to have you start up and say you don't like him; why! all I can say is, it's dreadful! dreadful! and if you go on in this way, I don't what *will* become of you."

"My dear Aunt!how—"

"I'm sure you *did* like Peter Redwood at the first of it, I've heard you say so more'n twenty times; but just as soon as I told you what *I* thought, and wanted you to marry him, oh dear no! you wouldn't do any such thing. Now, if that isn't clear sheer obstinacy and ugliness, I'd like to know what is."

"I never liked him or disliked him before; he was simply indifferent; but now I am compelled to make a choice, I find hating much more suited to my mood than loving.

"Psha! I never did listen to such stuff, why can't you at least talk like a person of sense, and not make use of such silly excuses. I'd rather, enough sight, you'd say right up and down, you won't marry Peter Redwood, than try to impose any such fishfash as that upon me for argument. But that's neither here nor there; we will even suppose for a moment that you really are as well qualified to decide on this matter as I am. I will put it on a different ground; I request it as a favor, and it is certainly a very slight one, after

all I've done for you; it is my last, my dying request; stop, hear all I have to say—if you have any regard for my happiness, and I'm sure you're forever talking about it—if you don't wish to bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, you will not hesitate to gratify so trifling, so reasonable a wish. Say once for all, will you promise to do what I ask or not?"

"Any thing but this! any thing, I don't care what it is! I will work my fingers to the bone! I will—"

"Oh yes! I've heard folks promise 'fore now—I know what it all amounts to; but it is just as I expected; I never asked any thing of you before, and now the very first thing I want you do for me, you won't do it. I've loved and cherished you as my own child, and this all the return I am to receive for my kindness. Well! have your own way about it! I've said my say! you can go, and marry John Moody, and be happy with him if you can, and forget there was ever such a person as Aunt Rebecca in existence."

With these words, Aunt Rebecca turned her face to the wall, as if all intercourse between her and Mary was then and there to cease, but still kept one eye on the watch to detect the first symptoms of relenting.

"Oh, dear Aunt Rebecca! don't talk and look in that dreadful way! you don't know I'm sure, how very wretched I am or—"

"We've talked about it long enough!" returned Aunt Rebecca, looking at the wall harder than ever, and drawing the bed clothes ferociously round her shoulders, "as I told you before, I've not a word more to say on the subject; now, if you have no objection, I will try and get a little sleep; if you can forgive yourself, it's well and good, but you can't expect me to forgive you, and what's more, I want you to remember that this must be our last meeting, till we meet before the judgment seat of God!"

Mary dammed up her tears, and stifled the agonizing sob; and then, advancing to the bed, she said in a low, clear voice, and with a dignity and elevation that sensibly affected Aunt Rebecca, "I will do all you ask! I will marry Peter Redwood! that is, if he still wishes it. You do not expect me to sacrifice my modesty so far as to make the proposal myself, I suppose!"

"No! oh no! you needn't trouble yourself about that; but you can't think how delighted I am at your beginning to see things a little more in the right light. I felt so uneasy about it, I didn't know what to do, but now it's all right! Smooth down the quilt a little, that's a good girl, and by and by, when I'm a bit rested, we'll talk more about it."

Mary got to her own room, she hardly knew how. She locked the door, drew the white dimity curtains before the window, hung up in her wardrobe a few articles of clothing she had left lying about the room, restored to her desk a stray pencil and penwiper, all with a degree of composure that surprised and puzzled her; and then sat down, leaning her head in her hands to enjoy her misery without disturbance. Anyone would have supposed from her going to work in this scientific fashion, that she was an adept at the business, thoroughly versed in all the art and mystery of sorrow, and that she meant to derive from it all the comfort it has to bestow. But this was by no means the case. Life to her had been, thus far, almost entirely rose-color. Living, as she did, so much in the outward world of sensation and perception with the birds and flowers, she had been seldom troubled by those dark and terrible questions that flit, like bats and unclean birds of night, atwhart the soul that stays too long in the thick twilight of its own groping speculations. Her own heart, with all its good and all its evil, had been to her as a sealed book, or as the fair, green turf. What wonder, then, if now the convulsion of passion, that rent it like an earthquake, disclosed to her curious eye profound and dismal abysses of scorn and pride and wrath, of whose existence she had never even dreamed, and from whose brink she shrank back appalled. Yet the discovery brought not pain alone: there was with it a sense of power, hitherto undeveloped, as if the boundaries of her nature had suddenly been enlarged, and certain privileges and immunities had been bestowed upon her, of which she had before been destitute. She advanced timidly into these portentous regions that stretched out far and wide before her, like a man who, having at length hit upon a secret by which his body may be fortified against the attacks of fire, yet walks with trembling steps among the billowy flames, not knowing how soon they may assert their old supremacy.

"If she chooses to be so selfish and unreasonable," she

said to herself, "she shall for all me! if it gives her any pleasure to make me miserable, I am glad of it! I hope she will enjoy it!"

Acting on this self-sacrificing principle, Mary determined to be as miserable as she could; and when one of decent capacity sets out with this intention, he usually ends by making himself very miserable indeed. This was the case with Mary: she made herself more miserable thanshe had ever been before, till at last she was really proud to see how very miserable she could be. She felt a wonderful complacency in looking upon herself in the light of a martyr, and in the thought of showing Aunt Rebecca how much she was suffering for her sake.

Unable any longer to remain in her chamber, she threw a shawl over her shoulders, and descended into the garden. It was a cold, gray day; the sky hung low, and now and then a snow-flake fell through the thick air. In the far west, a narrow streak of blue alone gave promise of a brighter morrow. Well pleased with the desolation that reigned over all around, Mary walked slowly along, with her eyes on the ground, till, coming to the farthest part of the garden, she stopped to gaze on the scene before her. Close at her right hand an apple-tree stood in bold relief against the sky. It was the tree that Philip had planted; and his parting words, as they stood together beside it in their happy and innocent childhood, now all at once rang loudly in her ears. She surveyed the tree with strange interest. It had grown with extraordinary strength and vigor, but its trunk was sadly bent and misshapen; innumerable shoots had started forth from its root and branches, which marred alike its usefulness and beauty; and Mary remembered that a few small and bitter apples were all it had ever borne.

"Both miserable!" she said, "is there, then, no happiness in this world? Poor Philip! what can be the matter? I wonder if you are as wretched as I am! No! nobody was ever so wretched as that! at least, I hope not. But I'm afraid he is very unhappy, and perhaps—perhaps he has fallen into bad habits; I remember he used to swear sometimes; how dreadfully it made me feel! but then he didn't know how wicked it was, or he wouldn't have done it. Oh,

if I could only see him once more! perhaps I might comfort him and help him. I wonder if he ever thinks of me. But no! he has forgotten me long ago; why should he remember me? yet, I used to love him; yes! and do now! and I always shall love him, whether he loves me or not! and I remember now, I promised to pray for him. But oh! how can I pray for him, when I can hardly pray for myself? Oh, God, forgive me! and forgive him! and make him happy, and help me to trust in thee!" and here her heart overflowed again in tears, but of a gentler sorrow. She looked the tree a loving farewell, and stole noiselessly up stairs again to her chamber. Sympathy for another had subdued her more selfish passion. Hope, that was with her no summer bird, again returned to her soul. Things, after all, were not so bad as they seemed; Peter might die (it must be confessed this looked awfully like selfishness), or Aunt Rebecca might change her mind, or something else might happen—she didn't know what exactly—to save her from this cruel fortune.

So, hastening with returning spirits to her aunt's chamber, and finding her still sleeping, she carefully, and with an excess of expiatory tenderness, arranged the bedclothes which had been disordered by the restless movements of the sleeper, and then sat down to await till she should awake. One hour and then another passed, while Mary, occupied with her own crowding fancies, knew nothing of the marvelous scene that was there enacting. The sun's ruddy face grew purple with the evening cold; his level rays, through the western window, painted a dying glory on the wall; the cows were lowing to be milked; the hens were elbowing each other on the roost; the glimmering candles telegraphed from farm house to farm house, over the frozen snow; big logs were laid upon the hearth; the doors were closed, the shutters barred; cheerful groups crowded round kitchen fires, while the busy housewife spread the evening board; the labors of the day were over, and the joys of night begun.

Suddenly rousing from her revery, Mary approached the bed, and bent over the sleeper, in wonder at her long slumber. No breath came through the open lips, there was no

light in the open eyes: in its hurry to get away, the spirit had forgotten to close behind it the door and windows of its forsaken habitation. One hand seemed to pull down the sleeve which had been drawn up from the wrist, as if Aunt Rebecca, even in death, had continued mindful of those proprieties that had made so great a part of her life.

CHAPTER XX.

SHOWING HOW MARY MANAGED DEACON REDWOOD, AND HOW AUNT BETHANY MANAGED HIS WIFE.

It was a month after the death of Aunt Rebecca. Mary had ceased to shudder at thought of the shock she received on that occasion; and poor Aunt Bethany had forgotten to wonder how it happened that Sister Rebecca could possibly die and she herself be still alive. During all this time Mary had seen Peter only at meeting; he had bowed with the most commendable assiduity whenever he could find an opportunity, and Mary had been once or twice compelled to return the salutation; but no other intercourse had passed between them. She began to hope that, as Aunt Rebecca's sudden death had prevented her promise from coming to the knowledge of the deacon, she should have no farther trouble from that quarter; but in this she was again mistaken. She might have known, if she had had any knowledge of the world, that a man so considerate as Deacon Redwood would have too much delicacy to obtrude upon her at such a time, and that if he waited longer than seemed natural in a matter of so much importance, it was simply to give her ample opportunity to recover from the shock of her recent and sudden bereavement.

It was just one month after that sad event, when the deacon, thinking that the time for action had at length arrived, boldly presented himself in Mrs. Grant's little parlor. He had indeed been there once before, but only in his official capacity; and then his funeral face plainly declared that he came on a visit of mercy, to condole with and comfort the afflicted, by discoursing on the vanity of life, the very fair proportion of that vanity that still remained to them, and their own speedy dissolution. But now, his whole ap-

pearance proclaimed that his errand was of a very different character.

"Hm! seems to me you're not looking quite so well as when I saw you last," he exclaimed, fixing his eyes steadily on Mary's face. "I'm afraid you take the loss of your aunt too hardly, though in one sense that can hardly be, when we consider the strength of her attachment, and that even in her last moments she was devising plans for your happiness; but, bless me! how pale you are! hadn't you better take a glass of water?"

"Why, what is the matter?" cried Aunt Bethany, running to Mary's assistance, "don't you feel well, dear? Say! what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing! nothing at all! only my head is rather uncomfortable from sitting so near the fire."

"I'm glad it's no worse!" said the deacon, kindly, "but you'd better sit farther off, for I really thought you were going to faint."

Mary moved her chair farther from the fire, and looked as unconcerned as possible. She even attempted to return the deacon's gaze; but this only increased her confusion, and she was glad to fasten her eyes again on her work.

"So!" he said to himself, softly patting his knee, "my countess thought herself a match for me: poor dove! why will you flutter? I mean you no harm. It's a gilded cage I bring you to. How that frown becomes her! a queen could not pout more majestically, and see her little fingers twitch that thread! If she could only break her promise as easily."

"Pardon me, if I am wrong; you, doubtless, understand these matters better than I, but it seems to me that doesn't look exactly right; that is, if they haven't got up a new-fangled way of making shirts lately."

"Why, Mary dear!" cried Aunt Bethany, "what could you be thinking of? I'm sure I never knowed you to make such a blunder before, since—you know when, and that's longer ago than I can remember almost. What could you have been thinking of?"

"It's easy enough to see what she has been thinking of," said the deacon, with a merry laugh; "she must be in love.

At any rate, that's the only explanation I should be willing to receive for such incredible absent-mindedness."

"Sure enough! that must be it! I remember when I was young, about your age, Mary, doing almost the very same thing; it's curious how things do come into one's head after so long a time, sometimes. I was making a shirt for father; 'twas nigh about New Year's; we'd had fried onions for dinner, I remember, for father was always prodigiously fond of fried onions; and Jemima Hackett—you never seen her, I guess,—but she'd happened in to dinner, and when she smelt the onions—they did smell the least mite in the world, some folks don't like it, you know—she turned up her nose; 'twasn't much of a nose anyway, the most contemptiblest little pug you ever did see, and yet—you won't believe it, I know—she'd set her cap for Joshua; and, 'La! says she, I want to know if you eat fried onions!' as impudent as, I don't know what; and father, he'd just put a piece in his mouth, and it riled him up so, he swallowed it piping hot, and it burnt him all the way down, and he said, says he, looking Miss Jemima right in the face, 'Eat fried onions! to be sure we does, Miss Jemima!' I felt real sorry for her when he said that, though she had been so rude like; but I knowed 'twas no use talking with father, for he always would speak right out, and folks used to be dreadful 'fraid of him. Well, as I was saying, I was makin' a shirt for father; 'twas before Joshua had said any thing; mother was there and sister Rebecca, when all to once mother she began to laugh. 'Why, what in the world are you laughing at?' says Rebecca, looking a little mite put out about it, for you know she could never bear folks to laugh without they had a reason, which to be sure is right enough, for we always ought to have a reason for everything; that's where we're better off than the dumb beasts. But mother she only laughed the harder, and I thought she never *would* stop. But at last she pointed her finger at the shirt I was a makin'; and when I looked, sure enough, I was sewin' one o' the sleeves right on to the neck. I thought I should never have heard the last of it. Mother she told Joshua, and it tickled him amazingly. But 'twasn't more'n a week after that 'fore we was engaged, and then I told him all about it. But who is

it, Mary? come, you needn't look so scared-like! it's nothing to be ashamed of!"

"No indeed, especially if it's the one I suppose."

"Why! who do you s'pose 'tis? I'm dying to know."

"Ah! it's hardly fair to tell tales out of school; but it's somebody not a great ways off, and his name begins with a P."

"P.! P.! I'm sure I can't think of anybody that begins with a P."

"I didn't say he began with a P." replied the deacon, laughing so unaffectedly that it was a pleasure only to hear him; "it was his name I was speaking of; but, Mary, forgive me for thus jesting with your feelings, and treating a subject in which you are so tenderly interested, with such unbecoming levity. I know what you are thinking of, and I assure you it gives me the highest gratification. You need not feel at all ashamed at entertaining an affection for a young man so thoroughly deserving. It doesn't become a father to be too forward in commending his own children, but in you I feel sure of finding a sympathizing listener, and one who would be inclined to think I had said too little rather than too much. I have seen all along the state of your feelings towards each other, and, as I said before, it has given me the highest gratification. I rejoice also to know that that truly excellent and sensible woman, your aunt Rebecca, who has so lately been taken from us to another and a better world, fully coincided in my views on this subject, as I learned from a conversation I had with her a short time before her death, in which she declared that so firmly was she persuaded that this step was essential to your happiness, and so strongly had she set her heart upon it, that she didn't believe she should rest easy in her grave if any thing happened to prevent it. She undoubtedly made the same, or nearly the same declaration to yourself.

"Well then, this being the case, as you and Peter are agreed, and as your aunt Rebecca and her sister, as well as myself, have all given our cheerful consent, there is nothing now, as I can see, in the way of your happiness, but that delay which decency and your own natural affection require. But in the mean time there is no harm I suppose, in considering the young people as engaged, and in allow-

ing them to indulge in that innocent familiarity so natural and so delightful in their situation ?"

"Certainly not !" replied Aunt Bethany, with a look of affectionate admiration, partly at Mary and partly at the deacon.

"I will, then, intimate to my son that his suit is favorably received, and that the marriage will take place as soon as circumstances will permit; and that in the meantime he and Mary are to see each other as often as they please."

So saying, the deacon rose to depart, when Mary, having at length gathered courage from despair, exclaimed, "I wish you would also say to him that,"—

"I know what you are going to say; but you may be assured it will not in the least alter his determination, or weaken in any degree the ardor of his attachment. Indeed, I am not sure that this signal display of filial affection towards your aunt will not rather inflame his eagerness to obtain possession of one who unites every grace to every virtue, and leaves us in doubt which most to admire, the beauty of her person, the vivacity of her intellect, or the sterling integrity of her heart."

The eminently respectful and even tender manner in which these words were uttered, deprived the flattery they conveyed of every appearance of grossness; so that they went as far as words could go towards removing the unfavorable impression Mary had conceived of Deacon Redwood, and even partially disarmed the hostility she had felt rising in her breast towards his son. But still, her instincts triumphed, and hardly had the deacon closed the door behind him, when all her former feelings returned in their full force. She saw herself, or so she thought, made the victim of a base conspiracy, deprived of her natural rights, and treated as if she had neither will nor judgment of her own. She saw her happiness sacrificed to the blind caprice and designing selfishness of others; and more than all, she saw that her own mistaken pride and passion had put the seal to her evil fortune by the promise she had made to her aunt Rebecca. If she had had the consolation of reflecting that this promise had been one of simple love and devotion, it would have been some relief; but the thought that it had been wrung from the very worst part of her nature, added bitterness to her misery. It was on this very account, how

ever, if possible, more sacred in her eyes; and in the midst of her wretchedness she found a strange sort of satisfaction, like Cranmer in thrusting his hand into the flames, in thinking how vigorously she would exact from herself the full performance of its conditions.

"I declare," she exclaimed, "I believe I am the most miserable creature that ever lived. Every thing is just as bad as it can be, and a little while ago I was so happy; but now it doesn't seem as if I should ever be happy again. Oh dear! Oh dear! what shall I do? Dear Aunt Bethany, can't you think of something to make me glad? But never mind (laughing hysterically) I shall be well to-morrow, or next year; or if not, no matter! I am only a poor, helpless orphan, and I ought to be very proud and happy at thought of marrying the son of Deacon Redwood. Well, I suppose I am happy! very happy! at any rate, I will try to think so; but all my life I have been thinking it was something very different."

"Why, Mary dear!"ejaculated Aunt Bethany no less than three times during this passionate speech, dropping her knitting and pushing up her spectacles to be sure she saw aright; "why, Mary dear! what *has* got into you? I never heard you talk so strangely before in all my born days, but tell me, dear, what is the matter, for I'm so flustrated I can't think a mite. You can't think how you frighten me; it's given me such a turn! and to hear you speak so of good old Deacon Redwood!"

"Good old Deacon Redwood! Where was his goodness, I wonder, when he persuaded Aunt Rebecca to make me promise to marry his son, when he knew I didn't love him? And then to think I should have been weak enough to make such a promise! Well, after all, I have none to blame but myself."

"Well! why! dear me! I can't seem to see exactly what it's all about. I always thought you kind o' liked Peter Redwood; and if you didn't, how came you to promise to marry him?"

"Because I didn't know what I was about, and thought I was doing something very grand and generous, and it wasn't any such thing; it was only because I got angry with Aunt Rebecca, and made up my mind that if she chose

to ask any thing so cruel and unreasonable, I would do it, if it killed me."

"Why it's very strange I never heard nothing about this before! If you'd only told me, my dear, I'd have spoken to Sister Rebecca about it, and then there'd been no trouble. But I don't see no need of your worrying at such a rate; for s'pose you did make a promise, of course she didn't know how you felt about it, or she'd never dreamt of no such thing."

"Yes! she did, know just how I felt; for we had a long talk together about it, and I told her as plainly as I knew how, that I didn't love Peter Redwood, that I never could love him, and that it would make me perfectly miserable to have to marry him."

"And did she ask you to promise after that?"

"Yes! She didn't seem to think my feelings of the slightest importance one way or the other, but kept repeating that it was only a mere nothing after all, and that I might marry him if it were only to oblige her. And oh! Aunt Bethany! she said—but no matter what she did say! it's all over now. I have promised, and I may as well make the best of it."

"My poor dear child! how sorry I am for you! but something may happen after all! Who knows but what Peter Redwood, when he hears how you feel, will let it all drop? I'm sure 'twould be real downright shabby in him if he didn't."

"No! there's no chance of that happiness; he has known, this long time, that—what my feelings were towards him; and besides, his father would never have come here on such an errand without saying something to him about it."

"Don't you think, dear, that you might perhaps come to like him after a while? I'm sure he's a real nice likely young man as there is anywheres about."

"No! it is utterly impossible that I ever should love him if I should live a hundred years; not, at any rate, while I am the same person that I am now."

"Well then!" cried Aunt Bethany, smiling cheerfully, to keep up her own courage as well as Mary's, "I will go myself, and see Mrs. Redwood, and tell her the whole story.

She ain't quite so pleasant for a body to talk to as the deacon; but, as my poor dear Joshua used to say, there's more ways 'n one to kill a cat, and I shouldn't wonder after all if 'twas the very best thing that we could do. I guess I know how to manage her; at any rate, 'twon't do no harm to try."

There was something so ludicrous in the idea of poor Aunt Bethany, the "veriest simplicity 'oman" that ever lived, attempting to manage the redoubtable Mrs. Redwood, that Mary could not help smiling; but her smile came painfully struggling up from the depths of her grief, like a bubble rising through deep water, which rests a moment lightly on the dark surface, then breaks and all is darker than before.

If the reader will recall the description given of Mrs. Redwood in a preceding chapter, he will perhaps see as clearly as Mary the desperate nature of the undertaking which Aunt Bethany now proposed to herself, and will be the better prepared to sympathize in her heroic purpose.

She had a full appreciation of the magnitude of the enterprise, and of the almost insurmountable difficulties by which it was beset; and, like a provident general, she prepared to meet them to the best of her ability. A basket was brought and filled with the choicest delicacies that the house afforded; for both Mary and Aunt Bethany agreed that nothing else would so surely propitiate Mrs. Redwood, since it would at the same time gratify her ruling passion and tend to allay any suspicions she might conceive of her visitor's motives.

The day after the deacon's visit, Aunt Bethany prepared to set out on her expedition. A characteristic incident will show more clearly than any description, how forcibly she felt the peculiar danger she would have to contend with. Mary, coming suddenly into the room, found her before the glass, painfully endeavoring to assume a dignified and imposing air, as a diminutive puppy will sometimes strive to catch the majestic gait and demeanor of some lordly mastiff.

"Ah! I'm glad you're come!" cried she; "for I was trying to see if I couldn't look like sister Rebecca, and I want you to tell me how I make out. I think I can do it first-rate; don't you? There! so!" and, having carefully adjusted her face in the glass, Aunt Bethany then turned it full upon Mary evidently expecting that she would be suitably impressed

by the resemblance. But there was something so irresistibly comic in the melancholy stare with which Aunt Bethany regarded her, that all Mary's respect and affection were not sufficient to enable her to preserve her gravity. At this effect, so different from what she had expected, Aunt Bethany redoubled her efforts; but Mary's laughter bursting out afresh at every development, she at length abandoned the attempt in considerable confusion, at the same time pleasantly exclaiming, "Well, well! I see it's no use; it's plain enough I don't look like sister Rebecca, for I don't believe anybody ever dared to laugh at her in her life."

"Why Aunt Bethany," cried Mary as soon as she could speak, "I was laughing to see how much you really looked like Aunt Rebecca, I never knew before how close the resemblance was; I had always supposed you were as much unlike almost as two persons could be; but if I were you I would give up all thoughts of going to see Mrs. Redwood; it won't do the least good, and like as not will get you into trouble. I can't bear to think that anyone I love should ever go inside their house."

"Come now, dear, don't you go to thinking any such thing! I ain't the least bit flustrated about it, and it would be a shame not to go, now the basket's all nicely packed."

So, the little woman, with, it must be confessed, a world of secret misgivings, but with as much show of courage as she could assume, set out on her errand, while Mary watched her from the back window, and prayed, though she could not hope, for her success. She saw her walk modestly around to the back door, and then stand a minute on the lower step, as if to summon all her courage. She even stooped down and peeped into the basket, as Mary supposed to see for the twentieth time if all were nicely arranged, and to snuff up a still further supply of confidence from its fragrant contents. Then she knocked once, very gently: Mary saw the movement, but could not hear the sound; and she wondered whether Mrs. Redwood could have heard it herself.

The next moment, however, the door opened about ten inches, and that lady appeared, stretching her neck through the aperture like a goose out of a coop, and leaning with one shoulder against the door and the other against the

doorpost, so that a mouse, supposing him absurd enough to wish to enter, could only have got in by running between her feet. In this highly advantageous position, she seemed to be parleying with Aunt Bethany about her admission: for several minutes she showed no signs of yielding, and at one time Mary thought that she was about to shut the door in her face; but just then Aunt Bethany adroitly swinging around before her the well-filled basket, like a perfumed censer, the door was opened nearly to its full extent, and all three disappeared from her sight.

Aunt Bethany, as we have seen, knocked gently at the deacon's door, which was immediately opened by his wife, whose ears, as quick as those of a hungry spider, at once detected the slightest sound.

"Ah! good afternoon, Mrs. Redwood," stammered Aunt Bethany, already feeling amazingly uncomfortable, and for that reason smiling as hard as she could.

"Good! do ye call it? Bad you mean; I'm sure I never saw a nastier day! Ugh! ugh! it's enough to freeze the very blood in one's veins."

"Well it *is* rather a dismalish sort of a day!" replied Aunt Bethany, shivering in concert, and wondering at the sudden change in the weather; "I'd no idee *'twas* so cold;" and she raised one foot to the second step; but, Mrs. Redwood still maintaining her position, she had to put it down again.

"Well!" piped Mrs. Redwood, gradually closing, or as Aunt Bethany more forcibly expressed it, "hunching" the door to by a peculiar motion of her shoulders, "what is't you're after? you didn't come over here to tell me what sort of a day 'twas, *I* know!"

"Oh no!" cried Aunt Bethany, in a prodigious bustle, "I declare! if I hadn't e'enamost forgot; we've been baking over t' our house, and I thought mebbe you'd like to taste some of our goodies. Such things always come 'mazing handy where there's children!"

So saying, she presented her basket, at sight of which Mrs. Redwood's countenance wonderfully relaxed; and, opening the door a little wider in order to extricate her arms, she stretched out her hand to lay hold of the precious burden; but Aunt Bethany cunningly pretended not to have perceived her intention, and boldly pushed for-

ward into the house, the basket like a forlorn hope rushing first into the breach. No sooner, however, had they reached the kitchen than Mrs. Redwood seized the basket, exclaiming, "I s'pose you're in a monstrous hurry, so I'll empty this 'ere right away!" and without any further preface she stowed its contents snugly in a dark closet, the key of which she then deposited in her own pocket, with an appearance of intense satisfaction. Then returning to Aunt Bethany, she forced the basket into her hand, exclaiming with a withered smile, "There! the children 'ill be real glad to get them 'ere, and the next time I bake a lot o' pies I must remember and send you some."

As she still continued standing, and seemed to think that her visitor had finished her errand, and that it was time for her to be gone, Aunt Bethany with the most shocking coolness and deliberation, worthy of Aunt Rebecca herself in her palmiest days, took off her bonnet and shawl and laid them on the table. If Mary could have seen her at that moment, she would have been forced to acknowledge that the resemblance between the sisters was indeed remarkable. Mrs. Redwood herself perceived it, and recoiled a step in unaffected consternation; for she had entertained a salutary dread of Aunt Rebecca during her lifetime, that lion-hearted woman having on more than one occasion forced her victorious way into her domicile, breaking through all her defenses with the same unconscious ease that an elephant would march with through a spider's web, spent the afternoon, and summed up the list of her aggressions by drinking tea, and carrying on a long and animated conversation with the deacon. These enormities were still fresh in her memory, and now for a moment caused her to hesitate whether she should pursue her usual system of offensive warfare, or patiently submit to a fate she could not resist.

As when Patroclus, clad in the celestial armor of the swift-footed Achilles, scoured the plains, driving the affrighted Trojans like sheep before him, with the remembrance of former overthrows, but presently detecting the counterfeit, they regained their courage and turned with added bitterness of wrath upon their pursuer,—so Mrs. Redwood, discovering her mistake and vexed at her idle fears, resolved to wreak the full extent of her vengeance upon the presumptuous intruder.

"You needn't take away my bonnet," cried Aunt Bethany, "for I can only stay a few minutes; I came in to have a private conversation with you on rather a delicate subject. You are of course aware," she continued, with an elevation of style altogether unusual to her, and majestically waving her hand for Mrs. Redwood to be seated, "of the visit your husband made at our house no longer ago than yesterday afternoon, and of the conversation that took place on that occasion."

"No! I don't know as I was 'ware of any such thing; I've enough else to do without vexing my noddle with any o'the deacon's matters. He 'tends pretty much to his own business, and I 'tend to mine. We've lived together now nigh upon twenty years, and we've got so that we let each other pretty much alone."

"But you surely were aware of his visit."

"I tell you I wa'nt 'ware o'no such thing, you don't suppose the deacon must run and tell me the first thing when he wants to go anywhere, do you?"

Oh no! certainly not! I only thought that, as this was such an important matter, he'd most likely mention it to you."

"You thought wrong, then, for once in your life; the deacon knows how to manage his own concerns, without bothering me about 'em; so if you've any thing to say, you'd better go to him at once!"

"I thought I would rather say it to you, since you are a woman, and would probably feel different from what a man would about it."

"I don't want to hear a word about it! so you needn't tell me; if the deacon had wanted me to know where he'd been, and what he'd been doing, he'd most likely told me himself."

"But, my dear Mrs. Redwood!"

"Now, don't go dearing me! I hate it, I always think one's after something they're ashamed to ask for, when they begin to talk in that sort o'style. If you've any thing to say, do say it right out and done with it, without all this fiddle faddle."

"Well! I was going to say—"

"Well! why don't you say? you've been going to say

this half hour, and you haven't said any thing yet that amounts to as much as once."

"Your Peter offered himself to our Mary, and—"

"Well! s'pose he has! there's no great harm in that, I hope! he had a right to offer himself, hadn't he?"

"Why yes! I don't—"

"Well then! what *are* you fussing about, I should like to know."

"Why! Sister Rebecca before she died, made her promise to marry him."

"She did! did she? well there's no harm in that, either, I suppose; your sister Rebecca was generally considered a sensible sort of a woman; and as for Mary, she had a perfect right to promise what she pleased, you know. She isn't the only girl that would like to make just such a promise, I'll answer for that."

"But she didn't like to make it; at least she only did it to please her aunt."

"And isn't that a good enough reason, I wonder? If she chose to please her aunt, why shouldn't she?

"But she doesn't love Peter well enough to—"

"Who ever supposed she did love him well enough? why I don't love him half well enough myself."

"But I was going to say she didn't love him well enough to marry him."

"What in the world, then, did she go and promise to marry him for? it's a likely story that she didn't know her own mind better'n that!"

"But I assure you she doesn't like him, and it would make her very unhappy to have to marry him."

"And it would make him very unhappy not to marry her, so where's the mighty difference? I tell him he's a fool, to be sure, for his pains, to think so much of such a conceited little hussy, when there are plenty o'girls, an enough sight puttier too, that are dying to have him, to say nothing of her having no father or mother one ever heard any thing good of."

"Why, Mrs. Redwood! I wonder how you *can* talk so, about such a good girl as Mary! when you know there isn't a puttier girl in the village, or anywhere else for that matter; and as for her mother, folks may say what they please, but I'll never believe any harm of her.

"Hm! but what was this wonderful story you was so umptious to tell me?"

"I didn't know as I said I had any thing very wonderful to tell; I only wanted to tell you how Mary felt in regard to marrying Peter, for I thought then, mebbe, you'd advise him to let the matter drop."

"I! oh no! I never advise him to do or not to do anything, I think he's old enough to act for himself; but is that all you had to say? I knew all that before."

"Why! I'm sure, I thought you said your husband hadn't told you any thing about it?"

"So I did; but I s'posed you meant something else, you looked so mighty important about it; he told me the whole story as soon as he came home."

"And you are willing, then, to see my poor dear Mary sacrifice the peace and happiness of her whole life, without doing any thing to prevent it?

"Haven't I just told you I'd nothing to say about it! I tell you if I had *my* way, Peter should no more marry that girl, than just nothing at all; but I can't sit here all day talking about nothing! I ought to had those dishes washed up more'n an hour ago: here's you bunnit; good afternoon! it's really grown quite pleasant!"

"Well!" cried Mary, as soon as Aunt Bethany entered the house, "what success have you met with? though I needn't ask, for your looks show plainly enough."

"No, you needn't ask!" replied Aunt Bethany, dolefully, as she sank into a chair, showing by this action, and also by the way she inclined her head to one side, and dropped her hands into her lap, the completeness of her despair. "I never saw such a woman in all my born days! you might just as well talk to the winds! La! she snatched the basket right out o' my hands the moment I got into the house; she tried to get it afore, but I wouldn't let her; and run and locked 'em all up in the closet, for the children she said, though precious little they'll ever get, I'm afraid, poor things! And then, what do you think? she brought back the basket without even so much as saying thank you, and was going to hurry me right out o' doors; but I just took off my things and laid 'em on the table; then I told her to sit down, she'd been standing all this time, for I had something

to tell her. But there! *such* a time as I've had, you never saw! In the first place, she said, she didn't know any thing about her husband coming over here yesterday, and after I'd told her the whole story, as well as she would let me, she up and said she'd knowed it all before; did you ever hear any thing so provoking? but then, such a woman I never did see. She says she hasn't any thing to do with Peter's affairs, or the deacon's, as she always called him, but if she had her way he never should marry you, if she could help it; so there's a drop o' comfort for you; though after all, there's no telling any thing by what she says: she's certainly the strangest woman! I couldn't help then just giving her a piece o' my mind, when she talked so about you, you know. So I took her, and give her a real good talking to, and I guess I shut her up pretty quick. I hope, dear, you don't think I did wrong, but I know I'm apt to say pretty sharp things sometimes. I wish I didn't, but really I couldn't help it."

"Why, dear Aunt Bethany!" cried Mary.

"But never mind, dear! we'll find some way o' getting out o' the difficulty yet; you may be sure of that; I don't know how exactly just now, to be sure, but it seems to me I was never half so good at thinking of things, and I shall hit on something or other before long. Sister Rebecca used to think I didn't know much more'n a child about such matters, and I dare say I didn't compared with her; but then, as my poor, dear Joshua used to say, there's more ways than one to kill a cat. He didn't want to kill a cat, but that was his way, you know; but I've certainly smartened up wonderfully this winter. What do you s'pose is the reason?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, what it can be, unless it is because you feel so much more interested in my affairs than you ever did in your own."

"Well, I shouldn't wonder if that did have something to do with it; but stop a minute, I've really got an idea. Supposing I should go to Parson Merrill, and tell him the whole story. Perhaps he'll say, that a promise made as yours was ought not to be minded; at any rate, he'd go and talk with the deacon, and they'd never dare to do any thing, if the minister says its wrong."

"He is not my conscience-keeper though, even if Dea-

con Redwood should be willing to trust him in that capacity; but I really don't believe he would feel like saying much one way or the other. He is a very young man, you know, and they say Deacon Redwood manages everything his own way ever since he's been here. If good old Mr. Bennett were only alive, it would be different; though, even then, I'm afraid nothing would be gained by his interference; but it would be a comfort to have his advice and sympathy, and I should feel sure then just what I ought to do."

"Well, then, if you don't want to go to Parson Merrill, and I don't much wonder, especially as he isn't a married man, there's Dr. Edgerly; s'pose we try him? he's a real clever man, and would do any thing in the world to help you, and glad o' the chance. One feels so much more comfortable when you know somebody else is thinking o' the same thing."

To this Mary hesitatingly agreed; and it was determined that Aunt Bethany should call at the doctor's the very next day, and if possible secure his co-operation in the war that was henceforth to be declared against the house of Redwood. But, with an instinctive appreciation of the weakness of the sex, though they benevolently assigned a very different reason, both Mary and Aunt Bethany at once decided that the doctor's wife must not be admitted to their council; for Mary naturally felt unwilling to have the circumstances of her forced engagement any more widely known than was absolutely necessary.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TWO BLAZES, AND THE ADVENTURES OF DR. EDGERLY.

On returning from Mrs. Grant's, after his last interview with Mary, Deacon Redwood found his wife and son awaiting his arrival, and he at once proceeded to give them an account of his negotiation."

"It's all right there," he began, "and you'll have no further trouble. When I came away it was fully understood and agreed upon, that you were to be married as soon as would be considered proper, and in the mean time you can remember that you are already engaged, and in all your intercourse with her you will, of course, take that for granted. But it will be as well at first not to seem too confident and presuming, for young girls like to be approached with all reverence and submission, as if they were really what we sometimes call them—our mistresses; and then, by degrees you can assume a more intimate and confidential tone. But you mustn't expect too much from her; and if she seems cold and reserved, remember it is the way with most of them, and her aunt's death would have some effect upon her behavior."

With this and much more similar wisdom, the deacon dismissed his audience for the night, remaining himself a while longer, as was his wont, to meditate over the kitchen fire. The wood upon the hearth was nearly consumed; but two feeble flames still lingered, as if loath to depart, around the dying embers. The deacon was not an imaginative man; his cold, clear intellect wanted the warmth and mellowness bestowed by that divine faculty. But, as he gazed, these flames seemed to him to take the shape and expression of human beings, and, by their mimic gestures, invite his attention.

"There," he said to himself, "this large blaze is mine; it is me, and this little one is Mary Grant; now, let us see

which will burn the longest, and that shall show which of us is to gain the advantage; whether I am to succeed in doing her the good I intend, and thus obtain the power of so much greater usefulness, or not."

Even while he spoke, the question seemed determined; the little blaze slowly shrank to a mere speck that was hardly discernible, while its triumphant rival expanded its giant bulk with an exultant illumination that fired the whole apartment and streamed out into the cold night.

"Yes, yes," nodded the deacon, softly patting his knee "I thought so, I said so; Mary Grant is no match for Marcus Redwood. No, the fates are against her." Not so fast, good Deacon, not so fast, the little blaze is not dead yet. See how it has caught hold of that projecting splinter, and now creeps slowly along, gaining strength at every step, while its burly brother seems in the last stage of a galloping consumption.

The deacon hastily stooped, and raising the brand on which his blaze was perched, turned it carefully round to entice the flame to leave its present insecure resting-place and establish itself in another position. But the effort proved too great for its exhausted energies, and only hastened its dissolution.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the deacon, tossing the brand again into the fire, "what a fool I am to be spending my time in such nonsense! But my mind don't seem to work well to-night, so I may as well go to bed. What! is that confounded blaze burning yet, and laughing at me too? there!" and under the shower of ashes now hurled upon it, the little blaze quietly gave up the ghost.

Peter began now to think it was time to present Mary with some more solid proof of his attachment, and he spent at least a week in devising a suitable offering as the exponent of his generosity. At length, by the advice of his sister Jenny, who seems to have been a shrewd, knowing damosel, though this single incident is all that is preserved of her history, he selected a work-box, as being the best fitted for the purpose; but, as he could find none in Totemwell, which she, the said Jenny, thought sufficiently handsome, he was obliged to wait till he could procure one from the city. Fortunately for his peace of mind, an opportunity

soon offered. A farmer, who was going down to Boston with a load of pork and other country produce, was entrusted with this delicate commission. He was directed to bring back the very handsomest work-box that could be procured for love or money,—the amount of the former commodity being unlimited; and the latter, with unexampled generosity, being raised as high as two dollars, or two and a quarter; for, as Peter with a sagacious wink observed to the farmer, who rather wondered at his extravagance, "One doesn't get married every day, and you may as well do the thing up handsome while you're about it."

In due time the box arrived, and, having been carefully examined and commented upon by all the Redwoods, and supplied in addition to its former contents with sundry balls of yarn and thread, was committed to Dickey, the youngest boy, with directions to give it into the hands of Mary herself. Peter followed him out to the gate, and in a low voice bid him be sure and see just exactly how she looked, and remember every word she said.

This was by no means a difficult task, for, as Dickey on his return declared, "she did not look nohow, and didn't say nothing either; only she didn't seem to know what to make of it, and thanked him for fetchin' on it over."

Still, in spite of this seeming indifference, Peter was very sanguine of the success of his present, for he was wholly unable to conceive how any heart, that of a young lady especially, should remain unaffected by the contemplation of so much magnificence. And, sooth to say, the box was an admirable structure, with a looking-glass in the cover, a shallow tray at top lined with pink satin, and an endless variety of odd-shaped holes and pockets with a perfect arsenal of odd-shaped machines fitting into them, so that it was an endless wonder whether the machines were made to fit the holes or the holes to fit the machines. The looking-glass, by some untoward accident, had been cracked across one corner; but then, as farmer Lewis triumphantly declared, he got it half a dollar cheaper, and you could see your face in it just as well as ever.

So, with Dan Cupid softly reposing on the satin cushion, laughing to see himself doubled in the broken mirror, or lurking in the odd-shaped pockets, the box like another tor-

pedo full of deadly intent, was sent by the cunning Peter to open a way into the heart of his fair enemy. But, alas for the calculations of mere human wisdom! the little blaze had at last found its splinter.

A few days after Peter's visit, Aunt Bethany, having at length screwed her courage to the sticking point, determined to put in execution her plan of consulting with Dr. Edgerly. But by a stroke of policy which she could not sufficiently admire, she concluded instead of going to the doctor to have the doctor come to her. "For you know," said she, "those Redwoods are the most awful starecats, and they'll be sure to see me going into the doctor's, and they'll think there's something to pay then, sure enough."

Mary at once assented to this proposition; so Aunt Bethany told Sally to put on her bonnet and shawl, and carry a mince pie, which she had nicely done up in a napkin, over to Mrs. Edgerly.

"And, stop a minute," cried Aunt Bethany, as if the idea had just occurred to her (oh, how she wished that Aunt Rebecca could have been there to see!) "won't you just say to the doctor that, if it's perfectly convenient, I'd like to have him just step in here some time in the course of the day?"

Away went Sally, and soon returned with the information that the doctor was not at home, but his wife would send him right straight over the very minute he got back. Aunt Bethany, as she again and again declared, was all in a fidget till he did come, and she bent her nose so much awry by pressing it against the window, in vain hope as it would seem of seeing round the corner, that Mary was seriously alarmed lest it should never recover its wonted perpendicularity. The doctor came, about the middle of the afternoon; and Aunt Bethany proceeded at once to tell him the story, but before she had half finished his indignation got the better of his patience, and he burst out: "And is it possible Mary can be so infatuated as to regard such a promise, and when it is evident that all Deacon Redwood is after is money? I must see her, and talk with her about it."

"Oh, no, that can't be to such a good man as he is; and, besides, he said himself he didn't care nothing at all about money, and Peter would have enough already."

"Did he say so? that only makes it more certain. I know Deacon Redwood better than you do, and if he doesn't care for money!——And between you and me, he'd be a fool if he didn't. Money! why, what is a man without it in this blessed land of liberty of ours? Doesn't it paint the rose and add a perfume to the violet? Doesn't it make a poppy sweeter than a honeysuckle? Deacon Redwood is a good man, a very good man, but he would not be half so good if he were poor."

"Why Dr. Edgerly, how you talk!"

"I know it, how I talk; but I can afford to talk, I'm poor. Nobody would ever think of calling *me* a good man. But if I had a hundred thousand dollars, I could buy a saintship to-morrow. And if I had a million, then—why then never a better saint in the calendar than St. Edgerly. However, that's neither here nor there; but this is what I have to propose. You make a will, bequeathing all your property to some of your relations, or, better yet, to some charitable object. I will find means to bring it to the knowledge of the deacon, and then if Peter still wishes to marry Mary, why let him have her, but if on the other hand, he withdraws his pretensions, the whole matter is settled."

It was with great difficulty that Aunt Bethany was induced to listen to this proposal; but the doctor's arguments at length prevailed, and nothing now remained but to submit the question to Mary's approval.

"Oh, yes," she exclaimed, "I would do it by all means; nothing could ever make me think you didn't love me; and as for the money, if it were a hundred times as much, it would be worth nothing to me married to a man I didn't love."

"You don't love him then?" said the doctor.

"Love him? No, I thought you knew I didn't."

"Why, then, not take the shortest way to get rid of him?"

"You forget my promise."

"You are positively determined, then, to keep that promise under all circumstances?"

"No, not all. I try simply to put myself in Aunt Rebecca's place, and if any thing ever happens that I think would have made her change her mind, I shall not feel bound by it any longer."

"You think, then, that if she were alive to-day she would still insist upon it."

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I don't; I believe she's in purgatory at this moment for that very thing, and if she could only come back, she'd be glad enough to set you free. But we'll find some way to do it without her help. I am sure I shall never live to see you Mrs. Redwood. You may depend upon it—it's not a very flattering speech I'm going to make—but you may depend upon it that neither Peter nor his father is half so much in love with you as with the money they expect you to bring into the family. Your good aunt here, I know, doesn't believe it, but I hope soon to show her her mistake.

"Well, there's some folks' hate better than their love, that's one comfort; and if they don't love you, there are plenty that do, and we'll find you a husband some of these days; so you need not be alarmed about that."

"It's a very solemn thing to be married," said Aunt Bethany.

"Yes, but it's a great deal more solemn not to be."

"Say you so, my dear? Well you are right there; but do you know, Mary, I always thought you'd marry Philip Hastings?"

"He was only a little boy, you know, when he was here."

"I know, and so was Methuselah; but let me see, he must be somewhere about twenty, I should think, by this time, and I dare say he's a very handsome fellow; very different stuff from this Peter Redwood he was, too. I don't know how 'twas, but I always had a great liking for that boy."

"Me too," cried Aunt Bethany, "and I always said he'd turn out something wonderful if he only lived. I remember Seth Hacket used to say he was the greatest genius he ever see, and he thought he looked like Daniel Webster."

"I never thought so much of that; most little boys look like somebody. I believe, in fact, I liked him because he was more like himself than anybody else, and because he was afraid of me when I spoke to him. I hate to be looked out of countenance by a boy."

"Well, I never!" said Aunt Bethany.

It was soon known through the whole village that Aunt

Bethany had made a will, and bequeathed nearly all her property to a second-cousin who lived in Weathersfield, in Illinois. Many were the surmises and discussions as to the meaning of this sudden movement; but no one was able to penetrate the mystery. Dr. Edgerly waited patiently to see the result of his experiment; but finding that nothing came of it, but that Peter visited Mary as often as usual, and that his father seemed even more desirous to hasten the wedding, he fell into a state of great perplexity, and began to stare into the fire harder than ever. In this state things continued till the time fixed by Aunt Rebecca had nearly expired; and Mary felt compelled, however reluctantly, to commence the preparations for the wedding. Peter's visits, meanwhile, were less annoying than they would otherwise have been; but, considering the matter now finally arranged, he did not think it necessary to weary either himself or Mary with idle compliments; and their evenings were usually past in silence, broken only by an occasional remark.

The dresses were bought, the cake was made, the guests invited. But, in the midst of all their festive preparations, Mary's countenance, so far from being lighted up with joy at thought of her approaching happiness, or still more agreeably shaded by bashful, earnest anticipation, was clouded with the darkest melancholy. The alternatives of hope and fear through which she had passed during the last six months, the wearisome and interminable contentions between her conscience and inclination, had gradually produced their effect: her health now failed rapidly; and Deacon Redwood saw with dismay a stronger hand than Dr. Edgerly's, and one that he, with all his pride of intellect, was utterly unable to contend against, threatening to dash forever his long cherished hopes at the very moment of their fulfillment. To Mary there was little painful in the thought that her grave clothes were to be her bridal garments, and her bridegroom the king of terrors. She rather exulted at thought of her approaching deliverance; and when Aunt Bethany or Dr. Edgerly expressed their fears lest her sickness should prove mortal, she gently reproached them for their want of sympathy. "My worst enemy," she said, "could not wish me a greater evil than to recover; and

surely you cannot be so cruel as to wish to deprive me of the only consolation I have left."

"Oh don't talk so, Mary dear," sobbed Aunt Bethany; "it makes me feel so dreadful; you mustn't die; I can't let you die. It's awfully selfish, I know, but you *will* try to get well, just to please me; now won't you? and as for that nasty Peter Redwood, if he ever comes near you again, I'll —I'll tell him to go right away just as fast as he can."

"My dear Aunt," returned Mary, smiling, "what happiness could there be in my life for others, when there is none for me? But I know what you are thinking of, and I would cheerfully live a few years longer; but it is not for us to say whether it shall be life or death. God will provide a comforter for your old age."

"Oh, my child, my child! how can you leave me all alone? You might wait for me. I shan't keep you long; and it's so dismal living here by one's self, all alone in this great big house, and so many empty beds, and it used to be so full and cheerful; but it will never be cheerful again. Oh, you must not die, I won't let you die without me. Only think, I never even went to school alone. I have always had somebody with me; and to die alone, it must be dreadful; I know it would frighten me to death. Oh, Mary, Mary! say, isn't there something you think you could eat? Maybe it would do you good."

But Mary did not die; the strength of her constitution was greater than her own hopes or the fears of her friends; but it may be doubted whether a far stronger constitution would have triumphed, but for a surprising and unexpected incident that, in teaching her how to hope, taught her also the secret of life.

One afternoon, a few days after Mary's illness had assumed an alarming character, Mrs. Edgerly came over to sit with her awhile, to relieve Aunt Bethany of her long watching. It was the last and pleasantest week of an unusually pleasant May, when the rosy blushes first begin to kindle in the pale cheek of Spring, before the burning glare of amorous Summer. In another week would be celebrated the golden marriage of this happy pair; all nature was invited to the feast, and the hills, the woods, the fields had been measured long before for their wedding dresses, and in their eagerness

to see how they fitted had already begun to try them on. It was easy to see, from the smiling faces that met one at every turn, that they fitted to a nicety: there was no grumbling about short waists or long waists, about close skirts or full skirts, about sleeve or flounce or bodice; everyone wore the fashion that most became her; and, though the variety was endless, the harmony was complete. With amiable vanity, the hills and woods and fields smiled at each other and the sky, and the sky smiled lovingly back. Over all New England lay the rich, thick, almost creamy sunlight, —the golden manna spread with even hand over the shaven fields, mixed with shadow on the distant hills, and heaped in little drifts on the sunny side of fences, gray barns, and brightly painted houses.

In Mary's room the rival powers yet contended. Death standing over her, brandished his dart; life swarmed in at the open windows. It came riding on a sunbeam, on the wind thick with the song of birds and the smell of early flowers. The rose bush in the window seat, the mignonnette beneath the wall, the woodbine her hands had taught to climb,—how could she leave them all just now, when they were so warmly returning her affections!

"Yes, yes," she sighed, "life is sweet, too sweet to give up without a pang; and I—I could have been so happy, and—and perhaps have made somebody else happy too. And he will never find me; but, oh! I am sure I was made to love, yet my life ends so strangely, snapped off; it seems as if I might as well never have been. But God's will be done! Yes," she repeated aloud, "God's will be done!"

"I say so too with all my heart," cried Mrs. Edgerly, who had just then entered the chamber; "especially (I may say it to you without being thought a perfect heathen), because I think his will is in this instance just the same as mine. I feel, for my part, just as sure he won't let you die as if he had told me of it; and, besides, how anybody is going to die such weather as this is more than I can imagine. My husband says, if all days were like this he should have to give up doctoring and turn shoemaker."

"Why shoemaker?" asked Mary, smiling.

"I asked him that myself, and he laughed and said, 'Well, folks would be so well and feel so much like dancing, they

wouldn't do any thing else; and that would make work for the shoemakers.' But there, how provoking! I've forgotten to bring my sewing-silk, and I wanted to hem this handkerchief this afternoon."

"I guess you can find some in that box; I have never used it myself, but I think I heard Aunt Bethany say it had a little of almost every thing in it."

"Why, what a pretty box!—it's elegant, but I never saw it before; where did you get it? Oh yes, yes, I understand; I'm sorry I said any thing about it; but I don't wonder you don't want to use it; if it was me I'd throw it into the fire; but here is the silk."

"Why, how did you know?"

"Know, why everybody knows. The whole village is talking about it; isn't everybody saying that Deacon Redwood ought to be ashamed of himself, and that if they were you they would no more think of marrying Peter than just nothing at all? I only wish my father was alive; but this Mr. Merrill, he's a very good man I dare say, but he darsn't say boo to a goose. And Deacon Redwood, he'll stand up there in the vestry, and pray that it would please God to restore you to health, when he knows all the time that a single word from him would do more than all the prayers he could make from now to Beersheba; but he's all for faith, I suppose, without works. No, if you wait for him to release you, you'll have to wait one while, you may be sure of that."

"And do they think I ought not to keep my promise to Aunt Rebecca?"

"I guess you'd think so if you could hear them talk. I only wish you could have been behind the door at our last sewing circle. Why, there wasn't one there but thought it was the strangest thing in the world that you should consider yourself bound by a promise made under such circumstances. And your Aunt Rebecca would have been any thing but flattered if she had heard the terms that some of the younger fry applied to her ladyship. They all agreed, I think without a dissenting voice, that she was the most cruel tyrant since Nero; and to be sure they have some reason, for she used to rule us with a rod of iron; but there, I've used up all your silk, there wasn't but three needlefuls

of it; now let's see what there is interesting in this newspaper."

So saying, Mrs. Edgerly unfolded the little bit of paper on which the silk had been wound, and began to read it with that strange, often superstitious interest that belongs to such waifs of literature.

"I declare," said she, "how provoking! there's nothing in the world but a lot of stupid advertisements. Oh, yes, here's something that looks a little more interesting."

"'Information wanted of a lady and little girl of the name of Da— (the rest of the line is torn off) who have been missing since March, 183–;— last heard of at Boston—visit some relations—slight and delicate— three years.'"

"Isn't that too bad? that's all there is. But, Mary, only think; perhaps that's meant for you; I should not wonder a bit, though to be sure it would be the strangest thing I ever heard of. I wonder when this was printed. I declare! there isn't a date in it, and I really can't tell what place 'twas, either. But wouldn't it be funny if this should be about you?"

"Yes, I think it would, especially as my name doesn't begin with Da."

"Mary Wallace—No, sure enough, it doesn't; it can't be you, then. Yet the age is right, and every thing else. Da— I wonder what name does begin with Da. But here comes my husband, I must tell him about it."

Dr. Edgerly hardly waited for his wife to finish, before he exclaimed "Mary, I am going to find your relations. I wonder I never thought of it before. Here you've been languishing in obscurity this twenty years; and all the time, for aught we know, you may be a princess, or some great body. I declare I'll set about it to-morrow."

"Why, Dr. Edgerly," said Aunt Bethany.

"Why, Aunt Bethany?" said Dr. Edgerly.

"To think that you should go to taking Mary away from me, and when you know how much I love her!"

"Do I know? Do you know how much you love her? There is poorness in the love that can be measured. Love is a mystery, too great to be fathomed."

"Now, William, how can you?" cried Mrs. Edgerly.

"I'm sure I don't know," returned her husband.

"But you don't mean so now! do you?" said Aunt Bethany. "But it's always the way; things are just as contrary with me as they can live. First, my poor, dear Joshua must needs die, just when I thought I was going to have such a nice time; and then, after a spell, when I'd got partly over that, father, he died too; and then sister Rebecca; and now Mary has either got to die or turn into somebody else. I declare, there's no end to the trouble one has in this world!"

At this moment a dreadful crash was heard from below, followed by a piercing scream.

"There, I told you so; it's just what I was saying, there's no end to trouble in this world; there doesn't a day pass without that careless hussy breaking something or other; but I should think now she'd smashed half the crockery there is in the house."

"Ah yes!" sighed Dr. Edgerly, "sorrow and disappointment are the lot of humanity. 'I never had a dear gazelle' —it's only yesterday I broke my shaving mug, one I'd used for *twenty* years. I never can become so attached to another; at any rate, I'll never set my heart again on any thing less constant than pewter. But it is better for bowls to *break* than hearts; and, after all, my mug may have made a very pretty sacrifice to *Nemesis;* and, really, Aunt Bethany, I am inclined to consider this *little* accident, *whatever* it may have been, *as a very favorable omen.*"

These last words were uttered under the most cruel disadvantage; for the doctor had hardly begun his speech when Mrs. Edgerly, who had learned by long experience to detect the earliest symptoms of what she called his crazy fits, and knew exactly what course to pursue, at once took hold of his arm, and began to push him towards the door, exclaiming, "Come, come! when are you going? There, do have done; I never saw such a man."

The doctor contrived to make a stand in the doorway; but his wife, having cunningly rapped his fingers with her parasol, first drove him from that strong-hold, and then, following up her advantage, pushed him all the way down the stairs and out into the street, poking him all the while with such marvelous energy, whenever he showed any signs of stopping, that the poor man had nothing for it but to submit.

"Well," said Mrs. Edgerly, smiling tenderly on her

parasol, as she tied tight its silken petticoat, "he's terribly provoking; but I never saw a man that wasn't, and I wouldn't change him for the best of 'em."

The project which Dr. Edgerly had so hastily conceived he was equally impatient to execute. Having once allowed it to take possession of his imagination, he became blind to all the difficulties he would have to contend with, or rather, those very difficulties did but inflame his ardor.

But, though Mary's health had already begun to amend, he could not think of leaving her until she had no longer any need of his services. He employed the time of this delay, however, very profitably in erecting the most magnificent and impossible castles, at which he arrived by ways still more magnificent, and still more impossible. Never was a beautiful princess delivered from her enchantment at half the expense of labor and ingenuity.

Sitting in the open door, looking into the little garden, with his chair tilted back at that angle which dreamers love so well, and his head slightly inclined to one side, as if to listen to an unseen voice, his imagination conjured up scenes and incidents of infinite variety, in all which he and Mary still played the principal part. It was equally delightful and surprising to see the easy dexterity with which he extricated himself and his fair companion from straits where anyone else would have folded his hands in despair. Like a knight errant in search of adventures, he was constantly plunging into all sorts of the most unheard-of perplexities, for no other reason in the world than to show how well he could get out of them.

At length, however, the time for action arrived; and, with many injunctions from his wife not to lose the umbrella, and to be sure and be back in three days, the doctor set out on his adventures. The first stopping-place was at Stratton Four Corners, where the wagon drew up before the door of a smart-looking hotel, with a portico running around three sides of it, and an ostler, "a dirty drab of a kitchen wench," and a parcel of half-distracted chickens running around the other.

"I shall learn nothing here," thought the doctor: "one might as well try to find out how many spankings Methuselah's mother had to give him, or how old he was when

he first began to wear trowsers, as attempt to discover any thing that is enveloped in the darkness of a fifteen year's antiquity in a country like this."

As he said this, he espied a second tavern at no great distance, that seemed to promise better things; and thither he at once directed his steps. Here, he was told that the last landlord had died several years before, and that none of his family remained in the village except one son, who was barkeeper at the hotel he had just left. This barkeeper was evidently a merry fellow. He consumed a prodigious quantity of tobacco; and, like most of those who use the weed habitually, he was compelled to let out his laughs very cautiously, like a man letting his neighbor's cows out of his pasture and keeping back his own. This, however, did not make them any more agreeable to the doctor.

"Why," cried he, after Dr. Edgerly had described as minutely as he could the persons of Mary and her mother, "you don't suppose I can remember the names of all the folks that ever stopped at our house, do you? Like enough we had dozens, just such as you tell on, put up there every day."

"True," replied the doctor, meekly; "but I didn't know but you might have books."

"And suppose we did, you don't suppose we should a gone to putting down what color their eyes was, nor how old they was, nor where they came from, did you?"

"No, but you might have their names."

"Their names! yes, that's a different thing; but you should a said that at the first of it."

"Well, to be sure, the names are all that is necessary; but have you the books here?"

"No, sir."

"Hem—could you—are they where you could send for them without too much trouble?"

"I don't know as I said we had any books, did I?" returned the bar-keeper, shutting one eye and winking very hard at the doctor with the other.

"No, not exactly; but I took it for granted that"—

"You hadn't ought ever to take any thing for granted

without you knows it's just so, and then you'll never be mistaken."

"You haven't any books, then?"

"I didn't say that neither, as I knows on; did I?"

"Well, have you any books, or have you not any books?"

"Exactly, that's coming to the pint; now the fact is just here: we never kept any books in those days, and them we did keep the children always tore 'em up for kites."

"For kites?"

"Yes, I've made many a kite that way, afore I learned to make 'em with a frame, and rare sport I've had too; now, I dare say you never flied a kite in your life."

"I should like to see the boy that's flown more or higher. But is that the stage to W.? If it is? I must be going."

"What's the stage to W., I'm sorry we can't accommodate you, but better luck next time; if they'd only waited till this house was built; but isn't this your umbrel'? I thought all along you'd be leaving it."

"Why so?"

"Oh, I can always tell by the cut of a man's jib, as they say down to Boston, whether he's used to traveling or not; but make haste or you'll lose your chance."

"Well," said the doctor as he took his seat in the stage, "for a man that's been to France and China, and all over the world as I have, that's really too bad—confound the fellow! I'd like to have an argument with him: if I'm not used to traveling I should like to know who is; it is all the fault of this plaguy umbrella. I wish I had left it at home; but Margaret was so afraid I'd spoil my clothes."

The memory of the shameful discomfiture he had here sustained, induced the doctor on his arrival at W. to try a different plan of operations; and, after making a few inquiries, he bent his steps towards a tavern in a distant part of the town, and which he thought from its description most likely to be the one of which he was in search.

Whatever might have been its attractions fifteen years before, at present it promised but an indifferent welcome. On the sign that swung and creaked before the door, was an almost illegible inscription, purporting that the house

had been opened nearly thirty years before, by Thomas Cadger; and, from the appearance of the premises, one would naturally suppose that no change had since taken place, either in the house or its inmates, except those produced by the wearing hand of time. These were sufficiently legible to strike the most careless eye. The ceaseless patter of sun and wind, and rain had worn the faded yellow paint from the windows and cornices; the fumbling of innumerable fingers had worn quite a hollow round the handle of the door; the nails were in many places starting from the clapboards; and the irregular slab of granite that formed the step, rocked nervously on its foundation. All spoke of neglect and decay; and as the doctor gazed, a feeling of melancholy stole over him, he hardly knew how.

On entering the old fashioned bar-room, the feeling of desolation became yet more oppressive. The tide of travel that once rolled past his door had evidently found another channel; and the effect upon the fortunes of Mr. Cadger was the same, to compare great things with small, as that of the discovery of the passage around the Cape of Good Hope, upon the prosperity of the Italian cities. Mr. Cadger had been watching the doctor, with his hands thrust into his pockets, and his forehead resting against the window. He now advanced to meet him, with a sort of bitter courtesy, that seemed to say, "Well, sir, I am really wonderfully obliged to you for your condescension in visiting my humble house, where there are so many others of so much higher pretensions."

This was not what he did say, however; he simply said: "Good afternoon, sir," accompanying this brief salutation with a bow quite as brief, but wonderfully expressive. He was a tall, portly personage, yet evidently far from being so portly as he would have been if fortune had continued favorable. He had a small, round head, covered with short, black curls; and across his forehead was a red mark, apparently produced by his habit of leaning against the sash. The doctor's eye involuntarily turned from this mark to the window; and there, about six feet from the floor, appeared a corresponding stain. The floor, also, was more worn in that spot than elsewhere, all which showed clearly enough

that the unfortunate landlord made that his "dismal post of observation," in watching for visitors who never came.

"You have kept this house many years, I understand," said Dr. Edgerly.

"Twenty-nine years, come next July," replied Mr. Cadger, drawing himself up.

"Then, of course, you were here fifteen years ago?"

"Of course; I haven't left the old house yet."

"Did you keep a list of your visitors at that time?"

Mr. Cadger made no reply, but going behind the bar, took from under it a very thick and very dirty volume; and casting a melancholy glance on the crowded pages, threw it down, with no gentle hand, before the doctor, with the simple remark, "There, sir, it is."

Dr. Edgerly turned over the leaves with trembling impatience, till he came to the month of March, and then ran his finger rapidly down the page. Mary and her mother had arrived in Totemwell on the seventeenth of the month, and, as the journey between the two places was usually performed in a day, it was probable that they had passed the preceding night at Mr. Cadger's. There were four names only for the fifteenth of March, three of these were easily deciphered, but the last was rendered quite illegible by a huge blot, that by accident or design had fallen directly upon it.

"How very unfortunate!" cried the doctor, "I made sure the moment I saw this house that it must certainly be the one I was in search of; and now there seems no possibility of settling the question. I suppose it's no use for me to describe to you the persons I wish to learn about? You wouldn't remember any thing that happened so long ago?"

"Not without it was something very particular. And I'd like to forget it all if I could."

"It is nothing very particular; it's only about a little girl and her mother, who, I have reason to suppose, stopped at your house on the very day where this blot happens to fall, and I wish to ascertain whether it is really so."

"May be," said Mr. Cadger, staring abstractedly at the ceiling; "but I can't say."

"You've no recollection of the circumstance?"

"Not the slightest."

"Perhaps," cried the doctor suddenly, pausing in his walk across the floor, "perhaps Mrs. Cadger might remember; women are more apt, you know, to notice such things than men."

Mr. Cadger went to the door, and called "Liza! Liza! you're wanted;" and in a few moments Mrs. Cadger appeared. She presented in many respects a marked contrast to her husband. She looked thin and anxious; but the suffering that had broken the spirit of the strong man had not destroyed her courage, nor soured her temper.

"Here's a gentleman wants to find out about a little girl and her mother, that stopped here fifteen years ago;" and, as if he were now relieved from all further responsibility, Mr. Cadger walked to the window, and leaning his forehead against the sash, began to stare vacantly into the street.

"Fifteen years ago," repeated Mrs. Cadger, stealing a glance at the little mirror; "that was in 1836." Why, Thomas, that was the year we lost our little Mary." Mr. Cadger made no answer, except a feeble attempt at a whistle; and she continued, in a lower tone, as if fearful of calling his attention, "She was just three years old, sir, and the most cunning little creature, with the brightest eyes, and her father used to make so much of her. He minds it sorely. But this little girl, what was she like? I used to notice little girls a good deal at that time, especially if they were about the same age; and I shouldn't wonder if I remembered something of this one."

"Well," replied the doctor, "I didn't see her myself till nearly two years after, but she was very beautiful. Her hair was dark, and her eyes too, I think."

"And did she stop at this house fifteen years ago?"

"That is the very thing I wish to learn. I, myself, believe she did, but one of the names is blotted so badly on the day when she must have been here, that it is impossible to make it out."

"I remember," said Mrs. Cadger, after several minutes reflection, "a little girl who came to our house just after we lost our little Mary. *He* took a deal of notice of her, for she seemed so much like our own darling, that no one could help noticing it. I remember, he came to me and

asked me if I didn't think 'twould do to ask the lady to leave the child with us a spell, she seemed so poorly; and I'm sure we'd have both taken her, and glad enough, to keep for our own; but I knew 'twould never do at all. She went away the next morning but one, and I do believe he took it more to heart than when his own child lay dead up stairs. I was rather tried about it at the time; but after all, perhaps, it was only fancy. Her name was Mary, too, as it happened, oddly enough."

"Mary Wallace?" cried the doctor, eagerly.

"No, that was not it; it was—well now, it's strange I can't remember, it seems as if it was on my tongue's end, too, all the time."

"Oh, well, I'm afraid it's no use: my little girl was named Mary Wallace."

"Well, I don't know but her's might have been too, though her mother never called her any thing but Mary; but her last name, I have it now, it was Daventry."

"Daventry, Daventry, Da. Are you sure?"

"Yes, perfectly sure: now I think of it, I must have seen it often in that very book; the blot has come since. They belonged, I think in York State, and were going to visit the lady's father, somewhere in New Hampshire or Vermont."

"Then, they went to Stratton Four Corners?"

"Yes, I think they did; but do you think they are the ones you wish to know about?"

"Yes, yes, I think they must be, though the name isn't exactly what I supposed. No, no, it must be Mary Wallace, Mary Wallace Daventry; she was too young to know her own name. I am very much obliged to you, more than I can tell. Was it an only child, this little Mary?"

"Oh, dear, no, sir, there were six others; but it was the youngest, and so we loved it best. Though it was a girl he used to call it, in his merry way, his Benjamin. Ah, it's little he's been merry since."

Though she spoke almost in a whisper, it was evident that her husband heard her; he now turned from the window, exclaiming, "If the gentleman has found out what he wants, why don't you let him alone, and not be bothering him with your nonsense? Away with you."

This last brief sentence was intended as a reply to his wife's look of tender sympathy, and perhaps also to conceal his own weakness. She went, however, without another word.

"She's a good woman," said Mr. Cadger, "but a little weak about that child; though her name hasn't been mentioned before for more than a year, and I hoped she had forgotten it. Is there any thing else, sir, in which I can be of service to you? I presume you are a stranger in the place?"

"Yes, sir, I never was in W. before, and shall be obliged to leave early to-morrow."

"And do you know this Mary, this little girl you were speaking of?"

"Yes, sir, to be sure I do, as well as I know myself."

"And is she the same pretty,—cunning little rogue she used to be?"

"Well, she's not so very little, for you must remember it's a long time since, and she is almost nineteen; but I can answer for her beauty. You'd have to look long to find her equal."

"Nineteen, is she? well, I can hardly believe it; but I'd go a good ways to see her for all that. Do you suppose she'll ever be passing through W.?"

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder if she did, and that before a very long while, too."

"Well, now, if she does, why can't you ask her to come to my house just for the sake of old times? I do think it would do my wife more good than any thing else that could happen, without it was to see the Beverly what it used to be; and that—well, tell her she shall be sure of a hearty welcome, and she shan't want for nothing if I only know what 'tis, though we don't perhaps make quite as much show as they do in some other places."

Dr. Edgerly cheerfully gave the required promise, and then hurried away. As he passed the window, he saw Mr. Cadger's face framed in its accustomed pane; but his expression, though perhaps quite as melancholy, was far less bitter than before.

Mrs. Edgerly's first care, after ascertaining that her husband had got back safe and sound, was to inquire after

the umbrella,—which he had left behind him in the stage; the next, to know what success his journey had met with.

Young Lady. But how came Mrs. Edgerly to know any thing about it? I thought they meant to keep it a secret.

Young Wife. Why, her husband told her, of course.

Young Lady. Why, do husbands tell their wives every thing?

Young Wife. To be sure they do; at least such good husbands as Dr. Edgerly.

Young Lady. Does your husband tell you every thing?

Young Wife. Certainly, child; how can you ask such silly questions? I'd like to know what you are laughing at now, sir.

Husband. Me? I wasn't laughing; I am as grave as a judge. But I want to hear the rest of the story.

Young Wife, pouting deliciously. But you *do* tell me every thing, you know you do. I made him tell me the other day all about some stock he'd been buying in a new railroad they've been building between here and Virginia, the underground railroad, you know, that they talk so much about in the papers.

Young Lady. Why! I thought—

Husband, reading very fast and loud:—

CHAPTER XXII.

THE JOURNEY.

Dr. Edgerly shook hands with Mary and Aunt Bethany, as if he had been gone a year; but he was not in half the hurry now to tell his story that he had been five hours or five minutes before. He sat down opposite his two expectant listeners with an air of ineffable satisfaction, like a sagacious two-year-old, with a piece of gingerbread, philosophically toying and dallying with its appetite, all the while just about to taste, all the while intellectually tasting, and thus prolonging to the very utmost the keen and subtle joys of anticipation. He had, besides, another motive, and that was the cruel and unjustifiable delight he found in teasing those for whom he entertained a particular regard. The doctor, indeed, gave a very different account of this propensity, asserting that the preparatory process through which he compelled his hearers to pass was intended simply to arouse their attention, just as we sharpen the appetite of a mastiff by offering him a piece of meat, and then snatching it away. The danger, in either case, of getting one's fingers bitten, is the only drawback I know of to this pleasant pastime.

"And do you really think," cried Mary, when the doctor had finished, "that it was my mother and I who stopped there that time, and that my name can possibly be Daventry?"

"Possibly! there's no possibility about it, it must be so; unless you suppose that on the very same day on which you arrived in W., another lady and another little girl answering to the same description arrived there too, and left at the same time to come to the same place. No, you are no longer Mary Wallace, you are Mary Daventry, and I hope that in your new character you will no longer consider yourself bound by that silly promise."

"I can hardly say so much as that, though I must confess it doesn't seem quite so binding as it did. I shan't get married to-day, at all events; bu twhat would you advise me to do next?"

"Well, the fact is, we have found out so much I really can't help wishing to find out more."

"You can't be more curious than I am; it seems as if I had never been curious before. It's so dreadful to be two persons at once! you needn't laugh. I assure you one character is enough for anybody, and to have to wear two at the same time, and not know which is the right one, and not know whether you are yourself or somebody else, it is really too bad."

"Well, now, for my part, instead of being doubled by this sad calamity, it seems to me that you are reduced to a mere abstraction, a perfect nonentity. I declare, I pity you; how odd it must seem; it's as bad as Peter Schlemyl's losing his shadow. I've a great mind to write a book about it, how a young lady lost her name by a most surprising accident in the nineteenth year of her age, and how much she suffered in consequence, and how she found it again after a long search—with a moral; I think I could make a very handsome moral; but, Mary, where is the bit of newspaper that kindled all this excitement—not burnt up, I hope, in its own blaze?"

"Burnt up? no, I guess 'tisn't," cried Aunt Bethany; "I've put it safe away in my Bible, and here 'tis now, if you want to see it."

"I thought possibly I might find out in what city it was printed; but I see nothing to show one way or the other. Were there no other pieces in the box? Perhaps we shall find there just what we want."

"I never thought of that," cried Mary; "but we can soon find out. Oh, yes, here 'tis! I've got it."

"But what is it? what does it say? how you do keep one waiting! I could have read it twenty times before this."

"Well, there! do take it; and read it aloud, so that we can hear."

"First let me put the two pieces together. Oh, yes, it's just the thing. Well are you both ready?"

"To be sure we are, how can you be so provoking?"

"But is Aunt Bethany ready?"

"Why deary me, yes;" said the old lady, as if a bomb-shell was about to explode directly under her chair, "I guess I am;!" then, adjusting her cap and spectacles, "I am now, at any rate."

"Information wanted of a lady and little girl, of the name of Daventry, who have been missing since March, 1836. They were last heard of at Boston, where they were on their way to visit some relatives in New Hampshire. The lady was of a slight and delicate frame, and suffering at the time under the effects of ill health. The child was about three years old, with dark eyes and hair. Any person who can give any information on this subject will please address Regnal Daventry, or N. Butler Daventry, New York.

"There you have it as clear as noonday, a father and an uncle. Bless me! how rich the girl is growing! Good names they are too, every one of them."

"But what does N. stand for? not a pretty name, or he would have put it in the paper; N. Butler sounds so awkward. I can't think of any thing that begins with N. except Noah, and Nathaniel, and Nehemiah; and I never *could* say uncle Noah."

"There's Nebuchadnezzar."

"Oh, you ugly creature!"

"Too long? well, perhaps it is, but then you can say uncle Neb or Nezzar. I once knew a very good man whose name was Nebbins."

"I don't care how good he was. But, dear Aunt Bethany! what is the matter with you? I'm sure I feel almost as much like crying as laughing, myself; but what is the matter?

"What you said about not having any relations;" sobbed Aunt Bethany, "and you're going away to leave me, and I shall never see you again, and I—I loved you so well that I thought maybe you wouldn't know the difference, and I can't bear to see you so glad, though I might have known how 'twould be; of course there can't be any thing like one's own flesh and blood relations."

"And do you suppose, that I could ever love anybody

better than my ownty donty Aunt Bethany? I'm sure I couldn't love you more if—"

"But you are going away to leave me."

"Yes, but I am coming back again; if I thought I shouldn't, I wouldn't stir a step."

"But who is to go with you and take care of you?

"I am" cried Dr. Edgerly, "that is if she really thinks of going to New York, which I didn't know she did before."

"Oh no, we can't think of putting you to all that trouble."

"No trouble at all, I assure you; I have been thinking this long time I should like to go to New York, only I couldn't muster courage, and this will be the very excuse I wanted."

"But I can't bear to give you so much trouble."

"Well, now, for my part," cried Mary, "it is just what I like; I never feel of half so much consequence, as when everybody is doing something for me."

"But you will have to go in those horrid cars, and some dreadful accident will be sure to happen. 'Twas only the other day they ran off the track, and killed I don't know how many people."

"Sheep and oxen; nobody else was killed except the engineer, and that's what he's paid for. Besides, according to the calculation of chances, it is mathematically impossible that a similar accident should occur again for a month."

"But Mary's so young and inexperienced; and I don't see how in the world she can get along without some one to take care of her."

"Why, there's Dr. Edgerly."

"Yes, but he can't be with you all the time; and, besides, you might be sick, or—"

"Well, suppose you go with us," cried the doctor, "that would settle all objections."

"What me?" replied the old lady with a brimming smile of satisfaction, "Oh no, I never could go such a long journey: it would be the death of me. But then, if Mary has set her heart upon it, I suppose I ought to try and make the effort; how soon do you think you shall go?"

"Oh, how good you are to take such a tiresome journey

for me! though I really think you will enjoy it, after you once set out."

"Well, dear, perhaps I shall; at any rate it'ill do me good to see you so happy; so you get ready as soon as you've a mind to."

"Well, let me see;" said the doctor, "to-day is Friday, suppose we start next Tuesday."

"Oh no," cried Mary and Aunt Bethany both in a breath, and not exactly in a breath either, but rather in a fugue or tandem, "we can't possibly get ready so soon as that."

"Well then, a week from Tuesday, and on the whole that will suit me all the better."

It was a part of the plan of our three confidants to keep their movements a profound secret, and they succeeded so well, that for the space of thirty-six hours not one in the village had heard a word of the matter. Then, however, the story burst out in several places at once, and spread with such rapidity, that all efforts to check it proved fruitless. It is impossible now to determine with any certainty whether Dr. Edgerly, Mary, or Aunt Bethany was to blame in this matter; yet in the absence of any positive proof, I think we may safely take it for granted that it could not have been the doctor, since he was only one and the others were two.

However, the story got out in some way or other, and great was the excitement among the village gossips in consequence. Dr. Edgerly and Mary had always been invested by these worthies with a superior dignity and importance, to what was awarded to the rest of their fellow-citizens. Dr. Edgerly had been in France, and even in China; there were dark hints about his having saved the life of a mandarin, and afterwards dined with him on bear's claws and birdnests; all agreed he was a very strange man, and that there must be some mystery about him, which "if folks only knew, they wouldn't be quite so intimate with him as they are now." It was natural that the journey of two such distinguished personages to the great city of New York, should produce a mighty stir and hubbub in that quiet community, and that all the wits should at once set to work to discover the reason. Among all the conjectures hazarded on this

occasion, none met with so much favor as one started by Miss Lavinia, who indeed did not so much conjecture as boldly assert, that Mary had at last found her father, and was going to New York to make him a visit; he was a poor tavern keeper who had suddenly made a fortune by a lucky speculation, and wanted Mary to come and keep house for him. This account being delivered with so much minuteness and precision, and certain mysterious shrugs, pauses, and interjections, as if Miss Lavinia could tell a great deal more if she pleased, presently, like Moses' rod, swallowed up all its competitors; and all agreed that if it was true, Peter Redwood was a very lucky fellow; but, then, why in the world didn't he go with her?

"It's my opinion," said one lady, "that she'll never marry Peter Redwood at all. Now she's got this great fortune, you see she'll turn up her nose at him, and all the rest of you, and serve him right too, for making such a fool of himself."

"Not by a long chalk," replied a bluff, good-looking young farmer, who sat near the lady on a low tombstone; "Mary Wallace is no such mean-spirited critter. She'll be just as good-natured and smiling as ever, and I for one 'll be glad enough to see her give Peter Redwood the mitten; he ain't more than half good enough for her."

"I dare say *you* think so, John Moody; misery, you know, loves company. Law me! how pale you've grown all of a sudden."

The young man's sunburnt face flushed with indignant shame; but he made no reply; and as he turned away to hide his confusion, an ill-natured titter ran around the circle.

"Poor fellow!" said one, "he hasn't got over that yet, I declare; it's too bad to laugh at him."

"Poor fellow," repeated the other, "poor enough I think, or he'd have got over it long ago; he's no more spirit than a dead cat. I don't see but there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught; and as for this Mary Wallace, I'm sick to death of her, and the sooner she gets out of Totemwell the better;" and so saying, she flounced out of the churchyard and into the church, in no very devout frame, followed by her companions laughing and winking at each other, as much as to say, "Don't she wish she could get him?"

As Dr. Edgerly and his family were returning from church, little Margy suddenly exclaimed, "Mother, don't you think Deacon Redwood loves me dearly?"

"Why Margy, what in the world made you think of that?"

"Oh, because he kept trying to kiss me all meeting time."

"Kept trying to kiss you! what *are* you thinking of?"

"Well, he kept making up faces as if he wanted to kiss me, at any rate; there, just so."

"Kiss you! yes," said her father, laughing inwardly, "as the wolf kissed Red Riding Hood; but it is too long a shot to do any harm."

Aside from this amiable expression, the deacon's face was singularly calm. He never turned his head from the pulpit; but by moving his eyes rather painfully to the right, he could obtain a glimpse of Mary's demure and sparkling countenance, and Aunt Bethany's genial smirk. The old lady was evidently uneasy; she fidgeted incessantly, and her little twinkling eyes seemed everywhere at once. Then she would suddenly straighten herself up, give her head a shake as if to rouse her ideas, and fix her eyes like gimlets on the minister, as much as to say, "There, it's no sort of use, I don't mean to lose another word." But insensibly her head would droop, and her thoughts go wandering away along the track of her approaching journey.

In the evening Dr. Edgerly walked over to sit a while with Aunt Bethany; soon after, as he had expected, Deacon Redwood entered. The conversation at first fell on the afternoon's sermon, and here all were agreed. But that subject was soon exhausted, and there was a long pause. Dr. Edgerly addressed an occasional remark, in a low tone, to Mary; and Aunt Bethany did her best to entangle Deacon Redwood in a discussion on the weather; but it was of no use. Mary, as if conscious of the approaching storm, was silent and abstracted; and the deacon was yet more impracticable. At length, he rose very solemnly, saying, "I came in to see you on a matter of a private nature, but as I see you are engaged I will call again: when shall I find you at liberty?"

"Oh, you needn't mind me," cried the doctor, "if what you have to say relates to any thing in which Miss Mary is concerned, as she, at least, has nothing to conceal."

"Ah indeed! I am glad to hear of that, for I am sure

that with such an adviser, she will do nothing but what is right and proper. May I ask how long it is since she has admitted you to such intimate confidence?"

"About ten years, I should say," replied the doctor.

"Then I am to suppose, that you are acquainted with the circumstances connected with her engagement?

"And possibly it is owing to your advice that she has seen fit, under one pretext and another, to put off again and again the time fixed for her marriage, and; but this is not my business at present. I came simply to inquire whether it can be possibly true, that you and Mary are really going to leave this week for New York."

"Why yes, we did think of making a short visit. Mary isn't very well, you know, and we thought a journey might do her good."

"That's all very well, though I should have supposed I had as good a right to be consulted as anybody else. I must say, I was a little surprised to find that you intended to leave town without even speaking to Peter about it."

"Oh, we never thought of such a thing; Mary supposed she should see him to-night, and then she meant to tell him, the first thing."

"Well, never mind about that now, but may I ask what it is that renders a journey necessary just at this time? It seems to me it would be far more convenient to wait till after the wedding. Peter, I know, would be delighted to make such a trip; and it would seem so strange for you to set off in this way, and without any assignable reason."

"She may have reasons;" cried the doctor, "though"—

"I beg your pardon, but if she really has any reasons, I would rather, if you have no objection, hear them from her own mouth, I have always found that the quickest way. If Miss Mary chooses to break the engagement at present existing between herself and my son, I have nothing further to say; but while that engagement continues, I feel that I have a right to demand an explanation of what seems so unaccountable. Will you be good enough, then, Miss Mary, to inform me what is the reason of this sudden journey?"

"Aunt Bethany has already—"

"Pardon me, but my concern at present is not to know what Aunt Bethany says, but what you have to say yourself."

"Well then, I won't tell you a word till after I get back, and that's all about it, just to punish you for asking me so many questions; I hate to be catechized in that way, ever since I went to school."

"Bravo!" said Dr. Edgerly to himself, "she don't need any of my help; there's the true woman at last; it will puzzle the deacon considerably to know how to manage her, now she has found the true secret of her power."

And, to tell the truth, the deacon did seem wofully disconcerted. Though an adept in all the other mysteries of human nature, he knew almost nothing of those arts by which a beautiful and clever woman can throw a spell over the wisest men, depriving them at once of all their boasted superiority, and reducing them to the condition of the most abject slaves. And even if he had known all that is to be known on this subject, the contest would still have been unequal, like that between Milton's great archangels, where Michael gets the upper hand of Satan, very meanly we can not help thinking, simply because his sword happens to be made of rather better stuff.

"But surely, you don't mean to be so childish and unreasonable as—"

"I mean to be just as childish and unreasonable as I please; it's a pity if I mayn't do so simple a thing as that; so don't plague me with any more of your questions. After I get back, perhaps, I'll tell you something; that is if you don't tease me, but if you do, I won't tell you a word. But you can't think how delighted I am at thought of going. Totemwell is such a stupid place, you know; nothing ever happens here from one year's end to another, one might as well be buried alive, and in New York we shall see such sights of pretty things; and we are going to the Museum to see the Happy Family! did you ever see a happy family, Deacon? and then Aunt Bethany and I will have such elegant times shopping. I'm going to bring home the prettiest bonnet that ever was seen in Totemwell, and books, and pictures, and ever so many things besides. Oh, I wouldn't miss going for the world. But you needn't look so sober about it, as if you thought I was going to wreck and ruin as fast as I could go. I only want to take one step out into the wide

wide world, and see what it is all made of; and then I shall hurry back into my snug little hole, and sit quietly down in the corner, to make bread, knit stockings, go to meeting, and meditate on the vanity of life all the rest of my days,—that is, if Dr. Edgerly will only give me a few lessons."

While Mary thus ran on, or rather flew, like a new-fledged bird, tremblingly exulting in its hitherto untried powers, half wondering half fearing whether it could be really true, the deacon sat and stared at her in stupid astonishment, and Dr. Edgerly laughed till the tears came into his eyes. He thought that never before had Mary looked so beautiful. Her eyes sparkled, her color came and went with every change of emotion, and her whole figure seemed radiant with animation. But if Mary herself was filled with surprise, Dr. Edgerly with amazement, and Deacon Redwood with consternation, what words can be found to express the effect of this sudden outburst upon Aunt Bethany? It is evident that there must be here a deficiency in the English language, for Aunt Bethany was wholly unable to find any word at all fitted to the occasion. So she contented herself with exclaiming, "Why, Mary Wallace!" accompanying these words with a look that, if it could only have been expressed in language, would have well supplied the deficiency above alluded to. Dr. Edgerly saw the look, and it redoubled his mirth; but, as he very seldom laughed aloud, no one noticed his indecorum.

The advantage was now plainly on the side of the allies; but the event was yet in suspense, for Deacon Redwood was never more dangerous than when seemingly at the very point of defeat. He now turned to Aunt Bethany, and with peculiar solemnity exclaimed, "And do you, too, Mrs. Grant, countenance with your favor and approbation what only the levity of youth can justify? and do you know what the world will say about it?"

"Of course she favors it," cried Mary, seeing her Aunt visibly staggered by this attack; "she is going herself, and she is almost as much pleased as I am myself: now, you needn't think you are going to deny it, for Dr. Edgerly is witness that he has heard you say, over and over again, that you wished Tuesday would come, for you couldn't bear to wait a single day. And as to what folks may say, I am

sure you are too much like Aunt Rebecca to pay any regard to that. I *should* like to know, though, what they'll say when they see us coming into church with our real New-York bonnets on; it will be so delicious. I know, at least, three or four who will be ready to expire with envy."

"May I request an answer to my question?" persisted the deacon; "are you really and truly in favor of this proceeding, and have you considered what others may say of it?"

"Why," returned Aunt Bethany, "I don't see no great harm in it myself, I actilly don't; and, as for other folks, I believe Mary's about right. I remember, my poor dear Joshua used to say—he had the lottest of such odd speeches of any man I ever see—if you stop and listen to every goose you'll never get to mill."

"Ah well," cried the deacon, sliding his hand over his face, like a schoolboy rubbing a sum off his slate, "if you t hink well of it, and are going yourself, why, that alters the case. I didn't fully understand that. I supposed all along that Mary was going with Dr. Edgerly; but if you are going, too, I am sure I have not the slightest objection. I think it is a very good plan, and Peter had better go with you, by all means. I wonder I hadn't thought of that before, it will be so pleasant for him and Mary, and I really think he deserves a little recreation. He's been very closely confined of late, and a journey will do him good."

"But he won't have time to get ready," stammered Aunt Bethany, to whom the wish was certainly father, if not mother also, to the thought; "for we want to start Tuesday."

"Oh, yes he will; he can do all he'll have to do in an hour; so you won't have to wait on his account. It will be a most admirable arrangement; he can take care of Mary, and Dr. Edgerly will have nothing to do but look after you. All I wonder at is that none of us thought of it before. But I must make haste and tell him; you needn't be under any concern, I'll answer for his being ready. Good evening, Mrs. Grant; good evening, Miss Mary; good evening, Dr. Edgerly."

"Did you ever see any thing so provoking in your life?" said Mary.

"It's really too bad," said Aunt Bethany.

"Just when we were going to have such a nice time too," said Mary.

"To think of that old Peter Redwood tagging about with us!" said Aunt Bethany.

"I declare I've a great mind not to go," said Mary.

"Couldn't we contrive some way to leave him behind?" said Aunt Bethany.

"Why don't you say something, doctor?" cried Mary.

"What can I say? What can any one say? I don't see but you'll have to marry him after all."

"But, seriously, is there no way of escaping this annoyance?"

"None that I can think of, except telling him plainly that we none of us desire his company; and, even then, I doubt if he would believe it. But, after all, it is not so bad as it might be, by any means; three is an awkward number both in walking and talking. Aunt Bethany will require a good deal of attention, and I will give him a hint that there is no way in which he can so well commend himself to your good graces as by looking after her comfort."

"Oh no, pray don't say any thing like that; it would be true, to be sure, in one sense, but not as he would understand it; and I wouldn't for the world have it said that I had ever given him any encouragement."

"I won't then for your sake, though I think he deserves no such consideration."

"That's not it entirely, but I don't like to deceive, even in trifles."

"I wish I could say as much, but it has become with me a kind of second nature. You can't imagine what a sacrifice it is to me to have to give up this little bit of chicanery. But, good night."

Bright and early, Wednesday morning, our travelers set off upon their journey. Aunt Bethany had taken care to provide herself with abundant funds, and now carried a hundred silver dollars in her pocket,—a huge bag or sack, not connected with any portion of her dress, but clinging affectionately by means of two pieces of tape around her ample waist. It contained in addition to the silver, and as a part of her ordinary equipment, a bunch of keys, a pen-

knife, a spectacle case of red morocco, a bit of Turkey rhubarb, not so big as it had been, an eyestone, a stocking just set up, and a variety of other articles that would have given the adventurous Lilliputians who explored the pockets of Gulliver even greater trouble than any of the wonders they found on that great man-mountain. One thing there was, however, that might have seemed expressly intended for their use, and that was a diminutive volume entitled Daily Food; but, small as it was, the widow's cruse was not more inexhaustible. Lest the weight of all these articles should bring them tumbling about her heels, Aunt Bethany had guarded against such a catastrophe by doubling the tape which supported them, as careful mariners strengthen that portion of their rigging which is to be subjected to any unusual strain.

As the day wore on, the whole party waxed more social; Dr. Edgerly repeated, for Mary's gratification, the whole story of Mr. Cadger; while Peter, who proved himself quite as useful on this occasion as the doctor had anticipated, kept Aunt Bethany wide awake by calling her attention to some object of interest they were passing. To be sure, the old lady seldom looked quick enough to see what was pointed out to her, but then she was so good-natured that she always pretended to see it perfectly, which on the whole did quite as well, and when the stage stopped before the hotel in W. no one could fail to see that the old lady was in perfect good-humor with herself and all the world. Peter was, in his own way, quite as well contented, and jumping briskly from the stage offered his hand to assist Mary to follow, exclaiming, "Well, I don't know how 'tis with the rest of you, but I've had traveling enough for one day, and am glad to see that we're among folks."

"But we are not going to stop here," said Mary.

"Not going to stop here! Why, what are you going to do?"

"We are going to Mr. Cadger's."

"Going to Mr. Cadger's! and who under the sun is Mr. Cadger? I tell you this is the best house in town, and where all the big bugs stop. What's the use of traveling, if you don't follow the crowd?"

"We are going to see a friend of mine," said Dr. Edgerly;

"but you had better stay here, by all means, if you prefer it; I dare say you'll enjoy yourself all the more."

"I dare say; but I ain't a going to do any such thing: if you won't stay here, you won't, I suppose, and that's all about it. But I know one thing; when we get to New York I ain't going to be tied up in this way, I mean to go where I can find some fun stirring. What! is that the house? why, it looks more like a barn than any thing else. I can't stand that no how you can fix it; so Mary you must excuse me, I'm going right straight back to the Piscataqua, and if the rest of you know when you're well off you'll follow suit."

"Here Mary, look quick," cried the doctor; "here's Mr. Cadger;" but before Mary could do as he requested, Mr. Cadger's face had vanished from the window, and the next moment appeared at the door.

"Ah," he cried, "I am glad to see you; but have you brought her with you?"

"Yes, she's in the stage, I only came in first to see if you could accommodate us for a day."

"Accommodate you! Yes, I guess I can; we are not so crowded as that comes to; but if the old house was full from garret to cellar, as I've seen it more than once, we'd squeeze you in somehow; but I want to see the young lady."

Scarcely had Mary taken off her bonnet in the little, old-fashioned parlor, that looked as if it hadn't been opened since she and her mother were there fifteen years before, when Mr. Cadger suddenly exclaimed, as if unable any longer to contain himself, "It's her, it's her, and no mistake; yes, that's the very same smile, I should have known it anywhere; but how the little thing has grown."

"Grown! I guess she has; but are you sure it's she?"

"Sure it's she? Do you think I could forget a face like that, and when I had loved it so well? (True, the heart never forgets). But there's my wife dying to see her, excuse me a moment;—and I want to know if you've really been living so near us all this time. I should have been over to Totemwell long before this if I had known it, I assure you, and so would my wife. It's astonishing how that woman does take on about it. I do believe she's talked of nothing

else since you were here; and, if you hadn't come just when you did, I had promised to take her over this week or next. I knew I should have to do it sometime or other, and it might as well be first as last; but I'm glad it's turned out as it has, for I can't tell you how I dreaded that journey. The fact is, I can't bear to leave the old house a single day, for I'm all the time thinking something is going to happen."

"Is there any reason why you should expect it now particularly."

"No, not a bit, no more than there's always been; and in fact not so much; but I keep on hoping just the same. I don't know how I should live without it."

"Pretty good living it is too, though after all it's only sauce to the pudding; but Mrs. Cadger will be here directly; suppose you and I step into the next room and see what she'll say; you haven't told her who 'tis, have you?"

"No; but she'll find out at once."

The gentlemen had hardly disappeared when Mrs. Cadger entered. She turned first towards Aunt Bethany, who sat fanning herself in a large rocking-chair, and looking desperately amiable; and then her gaze rested upon Mary, who, conscious of her scrutiny, and highly interested in the result, blushed, fidgeted, looked down, and at last looked up, not indeed to sigh, but to smile.

"Why! why! is it really? can it be possible? no, it can't be little Mary Daventry. I won't believe it, so it's no use telling me; but it's her eyes and her hair to a turn, only may be a little darker."

"Oh, ho!" cried Dr. Edgerly, now bustling into the room, "so you're a thief are you, Miss Mary? been stealing somebody's eyes and hair; you'll have to stand in the pillory for that, my dear; there, look at her! did you ever see anybody look so guilty; but try again, Mrs. Cadger—how do you do? I'm glad to see you looking so well—perhaps we shall find something else that doesn't belong to her. That mouth now, I'll dare be sworn she never came honestly by that either."

"Oh, yes, her mouth hasn't altered the least mite; and her smile, that's the way I knew her first. I can remember she looked just so the morning she went away, and I gave her a little plumcake I'd made on purpose for her."

"I don't believe she'd smile at plumcake now, it's too innocent for her altogether. I declare it's worse and worse; first her eyes, then her mouth, and now her smile; I don't believe there's any thing of this Mary Daventry's she hasn't stolen; anybody that can steal a smile can steal any thing; but I see she feels badly enough about it, poor thing, so we may as well let the matter drop."

"It's about time to be thinking of supper, I guess," said Mr. Cadger.

"Well, that's the next best thing I know of—next best to dinner, I mean."

"Oh, for shame!" cried Mary, "to think so much of eating!"

"Ah, my dear! I have got over that weakness, and so will you if you live long enough. I assure you, it's the only pleasure that doesn't make me regret the days of my childhood. Books are wearisome; I have done with toys, all other amusements fail for lack of novelty; but this is ever fresh, and ever new. The dinner-table is the only place where one doesn't suffer from ennui during the first hour. I tell you again, when you are as old as I am, and your heart has grown callous to all other emotions, you will learn to prize this as it deserves."

"Perhaps so, but I don't mean my heart shall ever grow callous."

"I dare say; but an old hen might as well say, 'I won't grow tough; it is the course of nature."

"Well, we shall see; but I must go now and dress for supper."

"*You* will see, but not I. By the time you are as old as I am, I shall be past seeing and past eating—both active and passive. Well! There's the bell for supper; for the next half hour my blood will play leap-frog as well as the best."

The hospitable landlady had evidently done her best to set forth such a supper as suited better the palmiest days of the Beverly, than its present decayed fortunes. The company was large enough to be cheerful, without being noisy; their appetites were good, or at any rate, if Mr. and Mrs. Cadger were anyways wanting in that particular, Mary and Aunt Bethany, as well as the doctor, had enough and to

spare. This was all very well, as far as the last were concerned; but I should be afraid to enumerate, even if I were capable of such an effort, the slices of bread and butter, and the quantities of broiled chicken and blue-berry pie, smothered in cream, disposed of by Mary on this occasion. Not that she exceeded, even by a single mouthful, the limit becoming so fair and delicate a lady; but then it might give room for cavil, as if after what she had just been saying, consistency required her to confine herself to the scantiest allowance, or at least to regard all the delicacies before her with philosophic apathy and ingratitude. But, be that as it may, Dr. Edgerly evidently regarded her with the highest delight and approbation. Suddenly raising her eyes from a chicken wing, to which she had just given the last finishing touches, she found his leering upon her from under his raised eyebrows, while, not to lose any time, he still continued at work on a drum-stick which he held picturesquely in both hands.

"You needn't look at me in that way," she cried. "I know what you are thinking of, well enough. But you are the worst man to talk with I ever saw, for you are always sure to remember every thing one says, and bring it up against them afterwards."

"Stop, stop, my dear; you misunderstand me cruelly; you do me gross injustice. I was thinking all the while that I had seen you in a great many situations, but had never seen you appear so interesting as just now; it gave me a new insight into your character—discovered a fresh bond of sympathy between us, and revealed qualities that I had no idea you possessed in such perfection. As to the precepts you dealt out so liberally to me a while ago—but never mind; will you keep me company in a piece of this blue-berry pie?"

On returning to the parlor, Aunt Bethany took from her pocket the stocking already mentioned, and proposed to listen to the story Mrs. Cadger had promised to tell her of Mary's former visit. Dr. Edgerly would gladly have joined their party, but Mr. Cadger had wound him up so completely, in a long story he had begun to spin at supper about the good old times, that he could not stir hand or foot. Mrs. Cadger, after several unsuccessful attempts to

commence her narrative, declared that really she didn't believe she could get along without her work. She didn't know how 'twas, but she was so used to having something in her hands, that she felt as awkward as could be without it. Aunt Bethany didn't know how 'twas either; she had often noticed the same thing herself, but didn't suppose that anyone else had ever made a similar observation. She had brought her knitting for that very purpose, and now strongly advised Mrs. Cadger to run and fetch her work just as if there was nobody there. The work was brought—a great quantity of stockings out at the heel, out at the toe, out everywhere. Mary kindly volunteered her assistance; and, all being thus in good humor, and disposed to make the best of everything:—

"You saw me, then, before Aunt Bethany," said Mary.

"Why no, child," cried Aunt Bethany, raising her spectacles, "not before I did; you can't mean that, you know."

"Only one day, aunty; but it does seem funny, don't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Mrs. Cadger, "and then to think I haven't seen you since. But that's a good deal better than I expected, for I didn't suppose I should ever set eyes on you again. And your mother too, I should love to see her of all things; but she's gone to a better world."

"Do tell me all about her, that is, all you can remember. Was she pretty? Did she look at all like me? What kind of eyes did she have? Wasn't she rather tall and slender, and very pale?"

"I think at your age, your mother must have looked very much like you; her hair and eyes were the same color. She certainly seemed a little taller and more slender like, but that may have been because she was so poorly. It was a bitter, blustering day enough, the day she came here. There'd been a thaw, and most of the snow had melted; but it blew up dreadful cold, and the roads were just as rough as they could be. There wasn't a soul in the stage but just you and your mother, and you were most frozen, poor thing; so I brought you right into this room, and when I came to take off your things, it took hold of me in such a way that I could hardly help bursting out a crying. You were just the same age, you know, as my Mary, and all alive and well; and I kept thinking why couldn't she be so too? Your

mother, she just sat down in the first chair she came to, and leaned her head on her hand in this way, and by and by when you ran up to her she didn't look up or take any notice, only she put one hand on your head when you laid it in her lap; but pretty soon, she thought I was watching her I suppose, though I wasn't, she got up and said traveling always made her head ache. I could see all the time it was the heart ache, more like, poor lady! and then she began to take her things off; but she didn't make out very well, so I offered to help her, and she never said yes or no, only stood stock still like a dead person, or half asleep."

"Well, we had supper ready in a few minutes, and all in apple-pie order; for every thing used to go on like clock-work in those days; and after a while I got her to go out just to take a cup o' tea and a bit o' toast, and that was all. I was anxious enough to see what *he* would say to the little girl, but at first I thought he wasn't going to take any notice of her at all; it seems he tried not to look at her; but he couldn't help it, and the moment he did, I never saw a man change so in my life. The moment they had gone into the other room he comes close up to me, and falls to hugging and kissing me at a great rate, not as though he was glad either, but very sober. 'Why, what's the matter now?' says I, for he hadn't done such a thing as that since the funeral. 'The little girl,' says he, 'didn't you see the little girl? how much she looks like her!' 'Didn't I tell you so before?' says I, 'but how poorly her mother looks! I don't believe she's long for this world.' 'Do you really think so?' says he, giving my arm a great pinch, 'I didn't know but 'twas my fancy; I couldn't help wishing she'd die here.' 'Why, what has got into you?' says I, for I really began to think he was out of his head, he talked and looked so strangely. 'Why,' says he, 'don't you see then we could keep the little girl?' Well, the next day she wasn't strong enough to travel, and I began to think myself that perhaps God had sent her here to take the place of our little Mary; but I suppose it's all for the best. She has found a pleasanter home I dare say, though there is no knowing what might have happened. He would have been a very different man, I know; 'twould have been just the making of him."

"Did my mother tell you much about herself or family?"

"Not a great deal," resumed Mrs. Cadger, wiping her eyes with her stocking spread on her left hand, "she didn't seem to like to talk much anyhow; and when she did, it was almost always about something else. I couldn't find out where she lived exactly, somewhere in New York, but she told me her husband had gone to South America, and she was going to her father's, in Drayton, I think she said, the town was called."

"Drayton!" cried Dr. Edgerly, now coming in from the next room, "did you say her father lived in Drayton?"

"Yes, I'm pretty sure that's the name; were you ever there?"

"I sometimes think I have never been anywhere else; I know it all by heart, yes by heart. What was her father's name?"

"She never told me his name, and I didn't like to ask her."

Dr. Edgerly seemed to hesitate a moment, then suddenly leaning forward, and gently raising Mary's face from her work by putting his hand under her chin, he continued to gaze as steadily as if he meant to daguerreotype her likeness on his heart.

"Why, Dr. Edgerly! what is the matter with you?" cried Mary, rather indignantly pushing away his hand, and at the same time inflicting by accident a trifling wound with her darning-needle.

The doctor instantly applied his lips to the offended member, and rising so suddenly as almost to upset his chair, began capering about the room in the most extraordinary fashion; whereupon the ladies rose in a body, Mary, Mrs. Cadger, and Aunt Bethany, and flocking about the unfortunate sufferer, began all at once to offer their condolements, and to suggest an endless variety of the alleviations common in such cases.

"I am so sorry," said Mary.

"Sorry!" said the doctor;" "so am I, that I did not find it out before; and so stupid in me too; I might have known I couldn't have loved you so for nothing."

"What *do* you mean?" cried Mary.

"I've seen her; I've seen her; yes, and you're the perfect image of her. But, Mary, do you know I am your uncle, or should have been? Heigh ho! what a world this is!"

"But you don't tell me what you mean, and I am dying to know."

"You remember Fanny Fielding?"

"Oh yes."

"Well your mother was her sister. I knew her well, and your father too; a noble, good-hearted fellow he was, as ever lived. Dr. Fielding, he was your grandfather, he died a good many years ago; it must have been about the time you came to Totemwell; how strange it is that I never found this out before; but it was so long since I had heard of your father, I had almost forgotten his name. Now haven't I a right to love you? and why can't you call me uncle, just to see how it would sound?"

"I'm sure I will call you uncle always if you wish me to: it would be strange indeed if I couldn't do such a little thing as that for one who has seen my mother."

"Will you call me uncle too?" said Mr. Cadger, "for I have seen her too, you know."

"I don't know, I must think about that; but now we must hear the rest of Mrs. Cadger's story, and to-morrow you must tell me yours."

"I've little more to tell," said Mrs. Cadger, while her husband went to fasten the doors; "the next day Mrs. Daventry felt well enough to start, and all we could say couldn't persuade her to say another hour. Oh, what a heavy day that was! It seemed exactly like losing our child over again! I couldn't bear to see 'em off; but he went out to help them into the stage, and then, while the driver was fastening on the baggage, he came into the house and went and leaned his head against the window, and stared out into the street. I happened to go into the bar-room an hour after, and there he was, just the same, and I don't believe he'd stirred an inch all that time. I tried to get him away, for I knew the best thing he could do was to stir about, so as to forget his trouble you know; but he only shrugged me away; and, after that, business was rather dull, and he

used to spend a great part of his time looking out o' that same window, and it made me so nervous and miserable, you can't imagine."

Mr. Cadger now came in; Mary bid both her uncles good night, and then she and Aunt Bethany went up stairs together. Dr. Edgerly overtook them at the head of the stairs, and stopped a moment to say, "Did you ever see such a loving couple? I'm sure you ought to be very proud of having gained two such admirers; though, to tell the truth, I begin to be a little jealous of this Mr. Cadger. I don't more than half like your calling him uncle."

"Oh, for shame!" cried Mary; "I advise you to go to bed, and pray that you may wake up in a more amiable temper. I've been thinking some time you were getting rather tiresome, and this Mr. Cadger would make a much more tractable counselor."

"Oh heavens! and earth! and seas! and skies! and has it come this? Can such ingratitude dwell in one so young? Is this"—

"We'll hear the rest to-morrow," said Mary, "to-night I hardly feel equal to such an effort;" and the next moment she was gone. The doctor made an effort to detain her, the consequence of which was that his lamp went out, and he was compelled to grope his way down stairs again to relight it. As he approached the parlor, he heard something that sounded very much like a kiss, or rather a succession of kisses, and accordingly coughed as loud as he could. A prodigious bustle and fluttering instantly followed, and then a profound silence; and on entering the room he found no-one there but Mr. Cadger, who was closing the shutters as innocently as if he had never kissed anybody in his life. On turning round, however, and seeing the doctor's eyes fixed on him with a peculiar expression—the doctor did his best not to look conscious, but it only made the matter worse,—on seeing this, I say, Mr. Cadger looked so desperately guilty, that no enlightened jury could have hesitated a moment. He began, to be sure, as soon as he recovered his presence of mind, to smack his lips very hard indeed, as if that was all he had been engaged in before; but I doubt if even this ingenious stratagem would have availed a great deal in his defense.

"Isn't she a beauty, now?" cried Mr. Cadger, as he touched his lamp to the doctor's?

"Mrs. Cadger, yes, she's all that, and more too; she"—

"Oh, I didn't mean her; she's a very good woman, I dare say, as women go now-a-days; but I was thinking of Miss Daventry."

"Oh, I thought you referred to Mrs. Cadger. Yes, Mary is a beauty, and what's more, she never can be any thing else; it's ingrain, Mr. Cadger, ingrain."

At the earnest entreaty of Mr. and Mrs. Cadger, our travelers remained in W. the whole of the next day, feasting on the fat of the land, and having their hearts made glad by all the delicacies the season afforded, and in truth their name was legion. They spent the morning in walking about the town, and seeing the various wonders it contained, whereby they were all marvelously edified, and gained, moreover, a notable appetite for dinner. After dinner, Dr. Edgerly smoked a cigar, taking care this time to bite off the end; after which he fell asleep in his chair, and looked very ridiculous for half an hour. Then he waked up with a pop, like old Colonel Corn, as Mary said (this was one of the Totemwellian jests); and, after looking very stupid and miserable for half an hour longer, he went out to see Mr. Cadger's pigs, gave him some excellent advice about improving the breed, waxed really eloquent about a full-blooded Suffolk he had bought in the spring, and finally almost burst a blood-vessel laughing at some Shanghai chickens whose feet and legs were stilting about the yard.

Breakfast, on Friday morning, was a decidedly melancholy affair. Mr. Cadger hardly tasted a mouthful, till at last Mary declared that if he looked so any longer she should never dare to stop there again; whereupon he helped himself to a thick wedge of Johnnycake and a slice of ham, and with this and a little molasses, he made quite a hearty meal.

When Dr. Edgerly came to pay the bill, "I've no idea," cried Mr. Cadger, "of any such thing. Why, I'd do as much and more too, every day, if it was only for the sake of seeing her pretty face. You don't know, Dr. Edgerly," he continued grasping the doctor's hand as in a vice, "how much I love that girl; in fact, I don't understand it my-

self;" then, as if ashamed of his emotion, he added with a laugh, "Folks seem to suppose just because a man keeps a public house he can't ever have any company, and if I thought so I wouldn't let the old sign stand another day."

As the doctor, however, still continued urgent, Mr. Cadger proposed a compromise, that if they would let him have his way that time, whenever they stopped at the Beverly again they might pay and welcome. To this arrangement the doctor was forced to consent, for the carriage was already at the door, and Peter impatiently urging them to make haste or they would lose the cars.

Little was said during their ride; though Peter, who seemed as usual in high spirits, talked almost incessantly, now about his dinner, now about a game of ninepins in which he got a hundred and twenty, and another gentleman in plaid trousers, two hundred and seventy; and now about the skill he had displayed in making a bargain with the driver, by which they had saved in their collective capacity no less than twelve and a half cents. Notwithstanding his oft-repeated declaration that they should be too late, they arrived at the station five minutes before it was time for the train to start; and Peter improved this opportunity by staring, in a peculiarly free and easy manner, at the female passengers, and by talking with the engineer about his engine, as if they had all three been old acquaintances; all which, I am sorry to say, excited Dr. Edgerly's envy not a little.

Our engineer, however, evidently looked on Peter with an evil eye; he seemed to take a malicious pleasure in thwarting his laudable efforts in attaining useful knowledge; and finally, just as Peter was stooping to examine a portion of the machinery, or, as he said, to see if her legs were straight and smooth, the perfidious varlet turned a screw, and fairly laid him on his back with a jet of scalding steam.

The bell now rang the third time, and the train began to gather headway; but Peter, not yet satisfied, preferred to wait till the last moment, in order to display his *sang froid*, or rather, as he said, to show that he "knew the ropes as well as anybody," and thus attract the attention of the bystanders. He succeeded in both his wishes, beyond his

hopes; for, not having sufficiently calculated the speed of the train, and his own *vis inertiæ* he tore the seat of his unmentionables, as a cockney, standing by, pantomimically described it, "from ere to ere," and at the same time he had the exquisite satisfaction of hearing one of the spectators exclaim: "See that darned fool; I wish he'd break his neck." On entering the car, he found his companions all in excellent spirits, but he was in no humor to join in their merriment, and sat down dejectedly at a little distance, where the more they laughed the more sober he became.

"They might know," he said to himself, "something was the matter with me. I only wish *their* trowsers was torn, they wouldn't laugh then I know. It's all their fault too; for if they hadn't been so long we should got here long ago. I wish the cars would run off the track, I swow I do; there'd be some trowsers torn then I guess."

The cars, however, were not disposed to gratify this very reasonable wish; or, if they were, they were happily prevented by the watchful care of Aunt Bethany, whose persevering efforts to maintain the center of gravity, were materially aided by the weight already mentioned.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NEW YORK.

"CARRIAGE sir! hack sir! wish to ride sir! this way sir, baggage sir! where to sir! Irving House—four of you, four dollars, sir, long way, sir."

"Heavens!" groaned Dr. Edgerly; "do I really look so green? Here Peter, you're just in time to give us the benefit of your financiering abilities; here is a rascal who asks four dollars for taking us half a mile. Do see if you can't find one who is a little more of a Christian."

"I've hired one already for a dollar, and here he is with the trunks, so come along. I declare this looks a little like it, Boston ain't nowhere. But what street's this?"

"Broadway."

"What! is this Broadway?" cried Mary, "I always supposed it was very wide; what do they call it Broadway for?"

Because it's so narrow, my dear; but don't speak so loud, somebody 'll hear you. See, there's Barnum's; looks exactly like a great show-box; and here's the Park, and the City Hall; you must remember and never speak disrespectfully of either; this, on the left, is the Astor House, and here is the Irving. I'll step in first, and see if we can obtain rooms.

In a few minutes he returned. "They've no rooms at present, but will have some before night, and in the meantime will make us as comfortable as possible in one of the parlors. New-York comfort they mean, and that's about on a par, I take it, with New-York milk. This is a splendid room, those are splendid mirrors, this is a splendid carpet; but comfort, that—but what's the matter Peter, is the house on fire?"

"No; but I wish 'twas, and all New York on top of it.

I gave that fellow a two dollar bill; and he's been and kept it, and says I agreed to give him two dollars; and he knows it's a lie as well as I do. I was going to give him a good flogging, but he said if I did, he'd send for the watch and have me wound up so tight, I shouldn't go again for a week, confound his old picture."

"I think it's extremely doubtful whether he has any," replied Dr. Edgerly, with placid satisfaction; "and if he has I don't see how confounding that would do us any good. All is, we must be more careful another time, and never ride when we can help it. Remember, from the moment you set foot in New York, everybody is in a conspiracy to get your money." ("They 'aint got mine yet," cried Aunt Bethany); "they'll be sure to have it in the long run, and the only thing is to see how long you can keep it. But what do you mean to do to-day? Peter has gone again, and we'd better arrange our plans now."

"I shan't feel easy till I find out about my relations, if I really have any."

"The first thing, then, we have to do, is to look in the directory, and see what that can tell us. Here it is, now we'll see if there's any body by the name of Daventry. Mr. Butler Daventry—the very first thing, number — Twentieth-street. You'd better let me see him first; it will be far less awkward after I've paved the way."

According to this arrangement, Dr. Edgerly took an omnibus, and rode up the Fifth Avenue as far as Twentieth street, and then alighting, a short walk brought him to the number he wished to find. It was a very aristocratic-looking mansion; and it was a very aristocratic-looking servant that answered the doctor's modest ring.

"Is Mr. Daventry at home?"

"No, sir, he ain't; he's out of town."

"When will he be back?"

"Well, sar, I couldn't give no 'sponsible answer to dat are. He's jes' about de worst man not to come home I ever see. I can't place no dependence on him."

"Are any of the family in?"

"Ain't got no family—never had, sar."

"Can you tell me any thing about his brother, Mr. Regnal Daventry, where he lives now?"

"Mass'r Regnal? he's dead sar; he died four years ago. I came with Mass'r Regnal from Souf America."

"Did he have any children?"

"Not since I had de honor of his acquaintance. I believe they died too, or somebody stole 'em 'fore he came home."

"Well," cried Mary, "so you have really got back at last; I began to think you were lost—but now let us hear all about it. Did you see Mr. Daventry? and what did he say? and what is he like?"

"I haven't seen him—he isn't in town, and what's more, I don't know when he will be. I almost wish we'd never left home."

"What, dismal already? I'm sure we have had, so far, a most delightful time—we have seen New York, and that's more than any body else can say, that lives in Totemwell. My poor little head is quite turned. I was just writing to Susy Moody; and the first thing, I found myself putting on all sorts of airs, and fearing whether my letter wasn't too familiar."

"But we may have to stay here a fortnight."

"Well, suppose we do; it's no great matter, we don't go a journey every day, and when we do, we may as well make the most of it."

"But my wife might feel uneasy, and"—

"Oh, you can write to her and tell her the reason; a fortnight is a long time, I know; but then she will be so glad when you *do* get home."

"Our money won't hold out, though; if we stay here two weeks, it will cost you at least sixty dollars."

At this announcement, Mary and Aunt Bethany looked aghast, and no one seemed to know what to say next; when Peter, suddenly entering, exclaimed, "Come, pack up, and let's be off. I've been and hired some rooms at a boarding house, and we may as well be going."

"Why, how came you to think of that?"

"Why, you didn't calculate to stay here I take it, and paying two dollars a day! If you did, I didn't; so I just took a Herald, and been running round half the morning to five hundred boarding-houses, more or less, till at last I've hit on one that's just the thing. You'll say so too

when you see it—good rooms, plenty to eat and drink, and every thing in first rate style."

"But how do you know about the eating?"

"Oh, I never do things half way, so I dove right down into the kitchen and saw what they was cooking. We'll have one good dinner, anyhow. There was a plaguy pretty girl there, too, a making a lot o' pie-crust; time! how she did blush! I reckon her mother had to take some after I came away, though she wasn't to blame either. You see I went to the door under the steps, and when they wanted to show me up stairs, I blundered right into the kitchen. But hurry up, or we shan't get there in time for dinner."

There was no one in the omnibus when they got in, except a tall, slender young gentleman who occupied the seat next the door. A little farther up the street, the coach stopped to take up a dapper-looking citizen, whom Dr. Edgerly at once christened in his own mind as Mr. Brisk. Next came a gentleman of middle age, and of a remarkably quiet and subdued demeanor, who, it was easy to see, could be no other than a country minister. "Ah!" said the doctor to himself, "it is my very good friend, and everybody's good friend, Mr. Meek! Six or seven other passengers, ladies and gentlemen, soon followed, and then the coach rattled furiously up Broadway. Opposite the St. Nicholas, Mr. Meek drew from his coat pocket a vast wallet, that had apparently belonged to his grandfather, and nervously taking out a sixpence, placed it between his lips for safe keeping. Whereupon Mr. Brisk started up and twitched the strap three times, very hard indeed. The coach stopped, and all the passengers began to draw in their toes; but, farther than this, nobody stirred.

"Now then," cried the driver, "who is it?"

Everybody now looked indignantly at Mr. Brisk, and Mr. Brisk looked indignantly at Mr. Meek.

"Here we are, sir, at the St. Nicholas," said Mr. Brisk, very pointedly, or so he thought at all events.

"Hm, I—I wish to get out at Thirty-ninth street," said Mr. Meek.

"Then, why didn't you say so?" cried Mr. Brisk, settling impatiently into his seat. "Go on driver;" Mr. Meek evidently considered himself snubbed; Dr. Edgerly and the

young gentleman in the corner interchanged smiles, and a pretty little girl with a pug-nose, who sat opposite, fairly laughed outright. This little affair having terminated so pleasantly, they once more got under way, and coasted pleasantly along past many a famous headland, and through whole fleets of drays, stages, and private carriages, till they came to Eighth street. Here Peter pulled the check with a coolness that surprised and mortified Dr. Edgerly; and when the driver asked "How many?" Peter replied in a firm and unaltered voice—"Four!" The young gentleman in the corner very politely assisted Mary to alight; and she was almost sure that, as he did so, he gave her hand a slight squeeze. But then, he might have done it simply to save her from falling, and on the whole, it would be very foolish to be angry; so she thanked him, and thought no more about it.

"There," said Peter, as they seated themselves in the parlor, "What do you say to this? Cheap enough I say, at six dollars and a half a week. Real mahogany this is, and you see they've got a piano, and fixins all complete. And Mrs. Harris says she's got a real genteel set o' boarders; she don't take any, without they come well recommended."

"How came she to take us, then?" said Dr. Edgerly.

"Oh, of course, she'd take us," answered Peter: "'twould be strange enough if she didn't, after what I told her."

"What was that?"

"Why, I told her we was some of the very best folks in Totemwell, regular uppercrust; that my name was Redwood, and that you was a doctor, and used to live in New York yourself; and Mary, didn't I touch her up a little? oh no! not at all, not by no means;" and here Peter winked and nodded very sagaciously.

"I hope you told her nothing but what was true," cried Mary, feeling a little uncomfortable, she hardly knew how; but before Peter could answer, the sliding door flew open, and Mrs. Harris, who had been all the time reconnoitering them through a crack, entered the parlor.

"Mrs. Harris was what is commonly called a very fleshy woman—she was above the usual height, and the turban which she wore instead of a cap, gave her a decidedly majestic appearance in the eyes of the vulgar. Her eyes were small, and the ill natured might, perhaps, have called

them piggish. We prefer rather to style them elephantine; for, small as they were, they were large enough to express a vast deal of comic humor, sagacity, and good-nature. She possessed great administrative and executive capacity, was the best manager, by all odds, in that section of the city, and her fame had extended several blocks on either side, and even as far as Broadway and the Sixth avenue. She received her new boarders in a business-like way, as if she were thoroughly used to it; and, after a moment's conversation, rang the bell for a servant to show them to their rooms, for dinner, she said, would be on the table in fifteen minutes. Accordingly, in just fifteen minutes the bell rang, and on descending to the dining room, they found the whole family curiously expecting their arrival.

Owing to the presence of the ladies, Mrs. Harris had assigned their party the post of honor at her left hand—that at her right being already occupied by a gentleman and his family, of the name of Binks. Mr. Binks was of very majestic proportions, being no less than five feet three inches in height, and having, moreover, such a way of swelling his chest and raising his head, that he seemed to be really several inches taller. He was said to have learned this art from a certain cock-pigeon that used to swell and strut every day before his dames, on a stable in the rear of the house; and hence this bird came to be familiarly known among the boarders, as Mr. P. John Binks. Mr. Binks'—or as the waiter *would* say, Mr. Binkse's—forehead was high and open, and his head was covered with a thick growth of short black hair, except about the crown, where there was a small circular clearing with a narrow path running away down to his left temple. Every body said that Binks was a very clever little fellow, except when he got his dander up. He himself said that he was affable and courteous, except when his honor was insulted; and Mrs. Harris declared that he might be the pleasantest man she knew of, if he would only try. From all which we are at liberty to infer that he didn't always try, and that when he didn't, the less one had to do with him the better.

Mr. Binks thought Mrs. Binks a very fine woman,—one of the finest women he knew of,—in short, admirably fitted to play the part of moon to his sun. Acting on this prin-

ciple, and wisely considering that the moon is simply a dark and obscure body if left to itself, Mr. Binks felt it his duty to shine on his wife with all his might; and he did shine, till poor Mrs. Binks, basking gratefully in his rays, and feebly reflecting a portion back to him, almost felt her heart melt within her at his excessive ardor. When, however, her sun had set, Mrs. Binks shone so much more brightly than usual, that it really seemed as if she had a luster of her own; and this had led some to say, "If it wasn't for her husband, what an agreeable woman Mrs. Binks might be!" But these hasty observers did not consider that though Mr. Binks might be below their horizon, he was still visible to Mrs. Binks, and that her increased splendor was undoubtedly owing to the fact that she was no longer eclipsed by his excessive brightness.

When this respectable couple were introduced by Mrs. Harris to Dr. Edgerly and his companions, an honor which was confined to them alone, the rest of the company, for some reason or other, began to exchange smiles and meaning glances, all except two young gentlemen at the lower end of the table, one of whom knew too much to laugh and the other too little. Mr. Binks, however, saw nothing of all this, or if he did, he never suspected that it had any reference to himself. So he sat down again to his soup, and now every thing went on just as it had done every day for the last six months. The dinner was good; Peter's spirits rose with eating, and before long he began to make himself exceedingly entertaining to all the company, except the two young gentlemen already mentioned, but especially to Miss Nancy Harris.

Miss Nancy was a jaunty and remarkably pretty girl, who talked and laughed a great deal, said odd things in an odd way, and had very much the untiring vivacity of a canary. She had a way of throwing up her head and perking her chin that reminded one irresistibly of that favorite songster; and Mr. Dickey, the same young gentleman who had already discovered the resemblance between Mr. Binks and the pigeon, and who seemed to have a turn for detecting such analogies, had also declared that Miss Nancy looked enough like a canary she kept in the dining room to be its sister. Mr. Dickey being, moreover, of a very

lively and facetious temper, and on very good terms with Miss Nancy, was in the habit of calling the said canary by the name of Miss Nancy Harris, junior; and though this jest had already lasted two summers, it never seemed to grow old, and was in fact quite as good as new; probably because Mr. Dickey would never lend it to any one else, and indeed was rather choice of it himself as being the best he had, like Hudibras, who,

> "Although we grant he had much wit,
> Was very shy of using it,
> As being loath to wear it out;
> And therefore bore it not about,
> Unless on holidays or so,
> As men their best apparel do."

But Peter, as we have seen, began to make himself very entertaining to Miss Nancy; and Miss Nancy, as in duty bound, began on her part to see how agreeable she could make herself to him. In fact, Peter cared little or nothing for Nancy, and Nancy cared as little for Peter; but as he wished to excite Mary's jealousy, so she aimed at exciting Mr. Dickey's. Mary's simplicity was too much for Peter, all the attentions he could pay her formidable rival seemed to have upon her little or no effect whatever; till at last, angry at her indifference, and perhaps finding Nancy's manners more suited to his taste, he began seriously to think whether it would not be better to abandon a pursuit where he met with nothing but coldness and neglect, and devote himself to one where his advances would apparently be received in a very different manner. "Nancy was certainly not so handsome as Mary, but she was enough sight prettier; and then, what a way she had! he didn't know what 'twas exactly, whether it was in her dress or figure, or what, but somehow or other these city girls did understand coming it over a fellow, and no mistake."

But Miss Nancy, though she had thus fairly or unfairly stolen Peter's heart, had not yet determined what to do with it. The decision of this question depended entirely on Mr. Dickey. Now Mr. Dickey was the eldest of Mrs. Harris' boarders. He used to declare in his droll way that he was just five years old, and that Mr. Binks, who came next in order,

was only three and a half. By this metaphorical mode of speaking he delicately hinted that his real life began on the day when he first entered the house of Mrs Harris; or at any rate, that if he could be said to have lived before that auspicious occasion, it was only as a chicken or oyster as yet unshelled. During these five years a violent flirtation had been waging between Mr. Dickey and Miss Nancy, which many declared had at length ended in a decisive engagement, and they were only waiting until Stewart and Co. should raise his wages, as they had promised to do at the end of the year, when they intended to be married. Mr. Dickey, indeed, always denied this accusation, declaring with a faint laugh that he was not a marrying man; but this assertion, so far from establishing his character as a confirmed Benedict, only seemed to make matters worse, as there were no less than seven young ladies, one for each day in the week, who cherished hopes more or less lively of, some time or other, becoming Mrs. Dickey. In fact, I have noticed that this is always the way, and that if a man wishes to gain the good will of the other sex, there is no surer means than making the above declaration; whether it is that they do not believe a word of it, or that each one thinks her own chance all the greater, or that the apparent difficulty of winning the prize makes it all the more desirable.

On Mr. Dickey then, we repeat, depended the decision of this momentous question, and to Mr. Dickey accordingly Miss Nancy turned her anxious eyes. But the only question Mr. Dickey seemed disposed to decide in any way was, how much pudding a man could possibly eat in two minutes; and so intent was he upon this interesting problem, that he appeared totally oblivious of all that was passing between Peter and Nancy. But when Mr. Masters, the young gentleman who knew too much to laugh, observed to Mr. Foster, the young gentleman who didn't know enough, that if Mr. Dickey didn't look sharp he'd find himself cut out before he knew it, Mr. Dickey glared at him so fiercely over the glass of water he was drinking, that, as Mr. Masters afterwards declared, if it hadn't been for that, that is, for the water, he should have thought he was as mad as a March hare. Mr. Dickey, having drained the tumbler and cast a savage glance through the bottom, which was happily very thick, at the

unconscious Peter, then suddenly rose and left the room, without taking any more notice of Miss Nancy than if she hadn't been there at all; whereupon there was an awkward pause round the table; Miss Nancy turned very red, then pale, but apparently gaining courage from the stern satisfaction visible in her mother's countenance, she began presently to flirt with Peter harder than ever, the conversation took a fresh start, and soon all things resumed their former tranquillity, and went on as if such a man as Mr. Dickey had never existed.

That much-injured individual, disgusted with the hypocrisy and ingratitude of the world, retired in high dudgeon to his own apartment, where he spent an hour in dressing himself in his best, with the fixed resolution of jumping off the Battery; but, first dropping into Wagner's, he swallowed such a prodigious quantity of ice cream (for as it was to be his last chance, he determined to make the most of it), that it seemed fairly to freeze his heart; and he returned home in a state of happy insensibility, that enabled him to meet the perfidious Nancy with the most profound indifference. No one could deny, however, that he had been shamefully used. For five years he had been regarded as the acknowledged lover of Miss Nancy. He had never said any thing, to be sure; but had he not declared his attachment in a thousand ways far more eloquent and intelligible? And had she not given him as many proofs of her reciprocal affection? No less than four suitors rejected for his sake, or scared away by his watchful guardianship, bore witness to the fact; and now to be ignobly defeated by the fifth, and he "nothing but a country hawberk," as Peter was politely designated by Mr. Dickey, was—. Mr. Dickey did not say what it was; but those who heard him judged from his looks that it was something very terrible indeed, quite as bad, probably, as "Potstauzend."

All this being whispered round among the boarders, soon reach the ears of Peter, and naturally gave him a prodigious sense of his own importance. He was not only in high feather at having achieved such a speedy conquest, but the idea of disappointing Mr. Dickey, towards whom he had already conceived a violent animosity, added greatly to

his satisfaction, and also to the value of the prize for which they were contending.

The next morning, on descending into the parlor, Mary, to her great surprise, found seated on one of the sofas the same young gentleman she had met in the omnibus, and who had so politely assisted her to alight. He rose on her entrance, and came forward as if to address her; but just then Mrs. Harris coming in to dust the furniture, and formally introducing him as Mr. Mason, he seemed suddenly confused, and, simply bidding Mary a good morning, sat down again to his book. Mary also took a book, and pretended to read; but her mind wandered, and she could not help stealing a glance now and then at her new acquaintance. Whenever she did so, she was sure to find his eyes just setting beneath the horizon of the heavy volume he was holding in both hands; and this happened so often, that the author, if he had been there in his own person, would have had good reason to feel insulted at seeing another thus preferred to himself.

At last, suddenly throwing down his book, Mr. Mason made a desperate attempt towards commencing a conversation, by observing, "I believe, Miss Grant, I have had the pleasure of meeting you before."

Mary good-naturedly assented to this proposition, and after this there was a pause, while Mr. Mason blushed and fidgeted by turns.

"Do you know," said he, once more returning to the charge, "that they say an acquaintance begun in an omnibus is sure to turn out either very good or very bad?"

"I don't remember ever hearing it said before," said Mary.

"And what do you think of ours? Is it likely to prove good or bad?"

"Good, I should hope," replied Mary, "I think it can hardly turn out very badly; at any rate, if it does, I shall think the worse of omnibusses ever after."

"So shall I; but are you easy to get acquainted with or hard?"

"I should think you might be able to answer that for yourself, from what you have seen already. I am sure that if any one should hear us talking together they would take

it for granted that we had been acquainted for years; and, to tell the truth, I can hardly help thinking so myself."

"Does it really seem so to you? I was thinking of the same thing; it seems exactly as if I had known you ever since we were children."

"And that is not a very long time, either," said Mary.

"Not long? well, perhaps you are right. But tell me, how long shall you remain in New York?"

"Not long; probably not more than a week."

"Not more than a week! then we must make haste; but I'm afraid I shall see very little of you; your time will be so much more pleasantly occupied."

"I hope I shall never be so much occupied as to neglect my friends," replied Mary, simply.

"You consider me one of your friends, then, do you?"

"I hardly know yet what to call you," said Mary, "but if we are not friends now, I hope we may be, before long."

"I've no doubt we should if we had time enough, but one week is so short! it's hardly better than an omnibus. I wish I knew whether I could trust you or not."

"How do you mean?"

"Why whether you are really as sincere and open-hearted as you seem; whether you mean just what you say and look."

"I don't mean to say any thing but what I feel," replied Mary; "why should you doubt me?"

"Because in the world one learns to doubt every thing and everybody, and most of all a beautiful woman; but while we've been talking, I have been studying your character, and I think I can give a pretty good guess at it already. Shall I tell you what conclusion I have arrived at?"

"Oh yes, indeed! I should like it of all things, that is, if you'll promise to say nothing bad of me. I don't think I could bear that, and I begin to be afraid of you already."

"Well then, in the first place, you are very fond of dress, not inordinately or foolishly, like most of your sex, but you have a very nice appreciation of the beautiful and becoming, and this leads you to dress always with taste and propriety. You would do the same on a desert island; but at the same time you think a great deal of others, and you

like to have Miss Such-a-one say, 'How well you look to day,' and Miss So-and-so exclaim, 'Oh, what a charming bonnet! my dear Mary' (excuse me, but I am not speaking in my own person, you know), 'where did you get it?'"

Mary laughed assent, and, thus encouraged, Mr. Mason went on. "But what is very remarkable, and shows where you differ from all other women, you are just as much, or at any rate almost as much pleased at seeing your friend Susy looking well as at looking well yourself."

"Susy!" cried Mary.

"Well, Kate then, or Lucy, if you like that better."

"Oh no! it is Susy; only I wondered how you knew; but what next?"

"Well, in the second place, you are very fond of flowers, though this follows of course from your love of beauty, not fond of seeing them merely, but of tending and training them. I shouldn't wonder in the least, now that Aunt Rebecca is dead, if you had a honeysuckle clambering over your chamber window, and some roses and geraniums in pots for winter."

"Aunt Rebecca! but how did you know any thing about her?"

"I'll tell you some time or other; but first let me give you another proof of my power. Action is your element, not reflection; like Macbeth's witch—excuse the comparison—'I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do,' should be your motto, for there is nothing requiring a quick eye and cunning hand that you could not do to perfection. If you had any desire to be called accomplished, which you have not, for you have never yet learned to know the deliciousness of flattery, it would cost you very little effort; but really I don't believe you'll ever try, unless it is to please some one you love. You are remarkably affectionate, not to pet, but to be petted; you love or did when a child, to sit in somebody's lap and lean your head against some warm and loving heart. If it were a man's, and a strong man's, all the better. Am I not right?"

"I really hardly know; but I always thought I took more delight in loving than in being loved."

"Yes, but your love looks up; you would rather love one above you than one below. If you are ever married,

your husband will probably be inferior to you in a great many respects; but if you love him, he will be to you as God, you will sink yourself entirely in him. You would never allow his inferiority, even to yourself; and you would do all you could to conceal it from him, and especially from others. You are fond of reading, but you like society better, and your own fire-side better still. If you had a husband, whom you loved, you would stay at home to please him five evenings in the week; I don't know about the sixth.

"So far your character is perfectly simple, clear, and intelligible. We can lay it out with as much precision as a map. But I can see by the motion of your head, and the dancing of your eye, that when you choose you can be as capricious and wayward as anybody; that it is dangerous to push you beyond a certain limit; for you can say and do things that would take those who knew you best entirely by surprise. I've no doubt I should like you all the better for this, though I dare say the good people of Totemwell are mightily shocked at what they consider terrible breaches of propriety. Tell me honestly, haven't you some kind friend or other who is fond of saying 'Now, my dear Mary! how can you allow yourself to say such things? I know you to well to think any thing of it myself, but I'm afraid it would seem very strange to others.'"

"Well!" cried Mary, "I really shall begin to think you are a conjurer, before long; you could hardly have hit it more exactly if you had heard every word; but really I never could tell exactly what they meant, for I always thought I was a model of propriety; but how could you possibly learn so much about me?"

"Oh, I saw you, you know, yesterday, and was rude enough to stare at you without mercy; and, besides, I pride myself on my penetration; but remember, I don't allow you to be a judge, whether I know much of you or little. For this is the last thing I was coming to; you are deplorably ignorant of your own character, your life thus far has been little different from that of a flower, all sensation, perception, enjoyment; or an eye, that sees all things, but sees not itself. You have never, probably, spent an hour in meditating on the nature of your own soul, on the mysteries of its

creation, its present and future being. You have never been in the habit of asking yourself why you do this or that, or of inquiring into your thoughts and feelings. You have been content to live without knowing why nor how; the wonders that affect you are such as strike the eye, the wonders of the sun and moon and stars, of mountains and seas and forests, and even of these you have only an imperfect sense, while you are blind as night to the far greater wonders of your spiritual being."

"I know it, but why should *you* reproach me?"

"I reproach you! I assure you I had no idea of such a thing; excuse me if my own remorseful reflections gave any thing of bitterness to my language. I was attempting to give you a simple analysis of what I believed to be your character, without intending either praise or blame; least of all should I presume to find fault with a combination of qualities, of all others, as I believe, best fitted to be good and to do good, to be happy and to make happy, and which I wish were my own more than all things else beside. But come, I have told you your character as well as I knew how; now tell me mine."

"Oh no, that I should never dare to do; and besides, I shouldn't really know how to begin."

"Why, you said a minute ago that you felt as if you had known me for years."

"Well, I do now, even more than I did then, but yet I can't mention a single quality that I feel at all sure that you possess."

"But you must have some opinion of me, and if you don't say what it is, I shall have to think it is a bad one."

"Well, I certainly don't think you are like anybody I ever knew before."

"Ah! well, and in what respect do you think I am different?"

"I don't know in what respects."

"For better is it, or worse?"

Mary's only reply to this was a smile, which Dr. Edgerly, who came in at that moment, declared was good enough to eat; and just then, the bell ringing for the second time, they all went to breakfast.

After breakfast our travelers returned to the parlor, to consult as to the best place of attending church.

"Which denomination do you prefer?" inquired Mr. Mason, "we have them of every sort."

"Oh, the Orthodox of course," replied Aunt Bethany, "I hope you didn't suppose we'd go anywhere else."

"I didn't know how you'd feel; when people are away from home, they generally think they can do as they please. But there are three or four Presbyterian churches not far from here, which you can find without difficulty."

"We don't want to go to your Presbyterian church; if I can't go to the Congregational meetin' house, I don't want to go at all."

"Well then! there's Dr. Cheever's, he's Congregational; you can go and hear him. I believe he's considered one of the great guns of orthodoxy."

"Yes, but what I want to know is, is he downright earnest, what good old Deacon Smiles, meant I suppose by unction?"

"Oh, yes! plenty of it, and function, and gumption besides."

"Oh, well, that's what I like; so, Mary, we may as well go and hear him, seems to me."

"Why don't you go and hear Crabtree?" said Mr. Foster.

"Why!" said Aunt Bethany, "is he a good preacher?"

"Oh, capital! first-rate! he'll keep you laughing half the time! it's as good as a play! The last time I was over there, the whole congregation laughed seven times; he stopped on purpose to let 'em; he's mighty good-natured!"

"I shouldn't think such preaching would do much good."

"Good! it's first-rate fun! not a bit like a church! I never go anywhere else."

"Do good!" cried Dr. Edgerly, "of course it does; it helps one digest his dinner; you don't know what a beneficial effect laughing has upon the diaphragm and the digestive functions; its the best exercise in the world."

"But I don't go to meetin' to get exercise, nor to digest my dinner! I go to get good, to be done good to."

"I know; and what better good can you do to a poor

dyspeptic than to help him digest his dinner? What surer way is there to fill the heart with pleasant and kindly thoughts? and how do you imagine he's ever to get to heaven without? Oh! there's no more fruitful source of evil than this same indigestion! But seriously, this Mr. Crabtree is a man of the most splendid talents; I remember reading a book of his several years ago, every sentence of which was like a sword-blade of Damascus. I should like well to hear him preach, but I'm afraid it's altogether too far."

"Well then, you'd as lief go with us, hadn't you?"

"Certainly, for I confess I have also a slight curiosity to hear Dr. Cheever myself."

"I'm afraid it will do you very little good, if that's all you go for; ain't this glass complete? I can see myself in it from head to foot. I declare I have a great mind to buy one to carry home; 'twould look first-rate, hung up in our best room; but there, I ought to be ashamed o' myself! talking about such things Sunday. Come Mary, it's time for you and me to be a dressing."

At the usual hour, Dr. Edgerly, accompanied by Mary and Aunt Bethany, set off for church; but Peter preferred to remain at home, alleging in excuse, that it was too hot to walk so far. He recovered his strength, however, in a marvelous manner, as soon as they were gone, and accepted without a moment's hesitation, an invitation on the part of Mrs. Harris to take a seat in her pew. But I am afraid that neither he nor Nancy derived much benefit from the services, as his thoughts were almost entirely occupied by the novelty of his situation, and Nancy was all the time wondering whether Mr. Dickey had seen her, and if so, what he thought about it.

"I believe I saw you at our church this morning!" said Mr. Binks, swelling up to Dr. Edgerly, as the whole family were collected in the parlor, waiting for dinner; "how were you pleased with the discourse?"

"I thought it was a very sensible discourse," replied the doctor, "though not exactly what I had expected."

"Well now!" said Aunt Bethany, "I thought 'twas a real good sermon and no mistake; but what a fine, handsome man Dr. Cheever is, and so young too! I hope he's

married, I'm sure; he's almost too handsome to be a minister!"

"Oh, that was not Dr. Cheever, my dear madam!" said Mr. Binks, "Dr. Cheever is not in town at present. This gentleman was a stranger; I heard his name, but I have forgotten it."

"Well now if that ain't curious! I thought as how that couldn't be Dr. Cheever, for he didn't seem a bit like what I'd expected, and the sermon was no great things either. I declare I'm disappointed! the man ought to have told us he wasn't Dr. Cheever, and then we shouldn't expected so much of him. I always like to know who I'm listening to—don't you? and I dare say nobody but me found out how 'twas."

"How very Aunt Rebeccaish Aunt Bethany is growing!" whispered Dr. Edgerly to Mary.

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, you never can catch her in a blunder; she's getting to be painfully shrewd and sagacious. I'm afraid she can't live long at this rate."

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself, to talk so? she'll live longer than either of us, I dare say. But I noticed this morning that your gloves were in a sad state; why didn't you bring them to me, and let me mend them?"

"Well, I don't know, unless it is that I don't like to ask a favor."

"Not like to ask a favor! then I'm afraid you don't like to bestow them either; I shall never dare to ask you to do any thing for me after this, if you are going to be so proud as that. For I suppose you know it's nothing in the world but pride."

"Well, I suppose it must be as you say, but do you know you're growing horribly logical and metaphysical, and all that, lately? I'm sadly afraid you're entirely spoilt, for when a woman gets to talking metaphysics or wearing spectacles, you may as well give her up. The next thing you know of, she'll be attending a womans' rights convention, and having herself stuck in the pillory of the newspapers, along of Rev. Antoinette Brown, and the rest of that gender."

"Well, sir!" cried a tall gentleman, who was standing near enough to Dr. Edgerly to catch this last sentence, and who was supposed to write for the Tribune, "and what's

the harm of that? Because a few noble hearted, generous, and magnanimous women have set out to redress the wrongs done to their sex, and have volunteered to sacrifice themselves as martyrs in the sacred cause of truth and justice, is that any reason they should be overwhelmed, as they have been, with such a storm of ridicule and contempt."

"Overwhelmed, are they? I'm glad to hear it, I hate martyrs! I never could abide 'em; they've no place in this nineteenth century. I knew a martyr once, and a terribly tiresome fellow he was too, as ever I came across; though he himself enjoyed it mightily, and grew fat on his martyrdom, as if it had been a dukedom or bishopric. The fact is, 'tisn't everybody that can be a martyr now-a-days; it used to be a very simple matter, when all you had to do was to be swallowed at a mouthful by some hungry lion. But martyrs now are apt to be mighty cunning, shrewd sort of fellows, that would be a great deal more likely to eat the lion than to be eaten."

At this everybody laughed, and Mr. Binks clapped the unfortunate champion on the back, exclaiming: "Ah, it's no use arguing that question here, you see, we know too much, my boy, altogether; don't we, Mrs. Binks? even the ladies are against you."

The other muttered some unintelligible words about being recreant to their high vocation, but made no further attempt to continue the controversy; which is undoubtedly a great loss to the world, as otherwise this much-vexed question might have been laid once for all.

"Well," said Miss Nancy, "since you were disappointed in not hearing Dr. Cheever, it's a great pity you hadn't gone with us! You would have heard what they call a most affecting and instructive discourse."

"What was the text?" said Aunt Bethany, "can't you give us some idea of what 'twas about?"

"I don't remember the text, but the sermon began a good deal like our old stories: 'Once upon a time, there was a saucy, ragged, barefooted, freckledfaced, dirty little urchin running about the streets of New York. He never had any father or mother, or if he had, they died long before he was born; he never read a word in the Bible, 'cause he hadn't any spectacles; he never went to church, 'cause he hadn't

any clothes. He used to lie and swear and steal, and throw stones, and do all sorts of wicked things, till he became the wickedest, raggedest, barefootedest, frecklefacedest, dirtiest little blackguard that ever ran after an engine. Then, all at once, some kind soul furnished him with shoes and stockings, a finetooth comb, a handkerchief, and a hymn book; and now,' says the minister, looking like a fish, as Mr. Binks says, all round the congregation, 'it is that same saucy, ragged, barefooted, frecklefaced, dirty little urchin who is about to address you.' "

"Did he really?" said Aunt Bethany.

Nobody, as far as I could find out, went to church in the afternoon, owing to the exceeding Sunday sultriness of the weather; nor did they do much of any thing, except lie on beds and sofas, and fan themselves with fans and newspapers, and wish it was night, and eat innumerable imaginary ice creams, and say from time to time, "Gracious! how hot it is! Seems to me I never knew it to be so hot! I wonder if it will be as hot to-morrow," and similar entertaining and original observations.

In the evening, Mr. Dickey and Mr. Provender, a lawyer's clerk, slipt out very slily, and presently returned with a generous pail full of ice cream; Miss Nancy laughed and clapped her hands, and ran for plates and spoons; and everybody looked as happy and benevolent as he could, except one or two, who tried to appear careless and unconcerned, as if they didn't see the pail at all, or couldn't by any possibility imagine what it contained.

"Oh, Mr. Provender!" cried Nancy, "how could you be so wicked as to buy ice cream Sunday? They ought to be ashamed to sell it to you, I'm sure."

"Stop! I'll carry it back, if you only say so; that is if you think it's wicked to eat it."

"Oh no, but suppose we leave it to Dr. Edgerly?"

"Well," said the doctor, "I think it was very wrong certainly, but it is no concern of ours. I thank Heaven that I, at least, am good enough to have no scruples about taking advantage of others' wickedness. A sad world it would be if everybody were as good as I am. No Sunday mail, no theater, no wars, no any thing."

"It's terrible cold, isn't it?" said Peter to Nancy, as he sat in a corner, cornerwise to that young lady.

"Yes, very; but that's the beauty of it; but which do you like best, lemon or vanilla?"

"Oh! ah! I think on the whole I like lemon best."

"Do you really? how strange! now I like vanilla a good deal the best, though strawberry, I think, is better than either."

"You're a married man I presume, sir," said Mr. Binks to Dr. Edgerly, holding his spoon aloft to wait for an answer.

"Yes, sir! I have that happiness."

"Any children?"

"Two, a girl and a boy."

"Ah! well now, I have six."

"Yes! I see," said Dr. Edgerly.

"If it isn't too much trouble, sir! I'd like to have you look at those children, and say what you think of them. Here, Demy! his name, sir, is Demosthenes, but we call him Demy for short; I gave him that name because it's historical, and may serve to awaken his curiosity about the ancient Greeks; the others are named on the same principle, only for different nations; ask your brothers and sisters to come this way; the youngest, an infant, has retired. Now, sir, I'd like you to say whether you often find a healthier looking set of children anywhere, even in the salubrious air and on the breezy hilltops of the country. And their minds, I will venture to say, are in as sound and healthy a state as their bodies, owing entirely to system, and a system, so far as I know, entirely original with myself. In the first place I've always taught them, early to bed—"

"And early to rise," cried Demy and Victoria, "makes a man healthy and wealthy and wise." "You see that's one way I inculcate wisdom. But, as I was saying, the mornings are short and dark in winter (because the sun is then so far south of the equator), and as I prefer that they should be in the habit of dressing without a light, I have got them into the way of placing all their clothes in such perfect order (order is heaven's first law), when they go to bed, that they can put them on as easily as if it were broad daylight. I consider this the more important because, as you are

aware, fires are very frequent in this large city, and in case of a sudden alarm, the ability (that means power) of dressing in the dark would be of great advantage. I am, perhaps, more sensitive to this form of danger than there is any need, but you know when a man has a helpless wife and children to look after, it's apt to make him something of a coward. At any rate, there is no harm in being ready, and so every once in a while we have what I call a bonfire; that is, I wake all the children and tell them to hurry on their clothes as quick as possible. Mrs. Binks and I do the same; and then, if we feel like it, I tie the sheets together, fasten one end to the bedpost and throw the other out of the window. It is very exciting; and the last time we tried it we were all dressed, and had the sheets ready in just six minutes and a half."

"Did you ever go any farther?"

"I did set out once, but I'd hardly got out the window when a foolish watchman began to holla, thieves, with all his might, and I was glad enough to get back again. That didn't satisfy the fellow, however, though he might have known a man couldn't be climbing that way into any window but his own, and he must needs thunder away at the door till he had waked everybody up, and then he insisted upon it there were burglars in the house; and at last I had to go down and give him a couple of dollars before he'd be quiet. That was more than two years ago, and there has never been a fire yet. However, as I said, it's as well to be prepared."

"Well, after the children are all up and drest, which generally happens in winter before the sun is above the *horizon*,—children! why don't you listen? before, I say, the sun is above the *hori*zon," (horizon, screamed all the children in full chorus), "oh! yes, horizon, after that comes the washing. You would probably suppose that there is only one way to do such a simple thing as that, but if you will only consider a moment, you will perceive that it is not quite so simple as it seems. Thus, I satisfied myself by repeated experiment, that the moment we plunge the head under water, a natural impulse impels us to close our eyes, whereby those delicate and beautiful instruments do not receive that benefit which they would from immediate con-

tact with the refreshing fluid. On experimenting still farther, I soon found that there was only one way of effecting my purpose, that is of washing the eye internally; and this was by keeping it wide open and looking round under water, just like a fish."

"How?" said Dr. Edgerly.

"Like a fish—here, children, come nearer, so that this gentleman can see; now!" and thereupon Mr. Binks, Master Demosthenes Binks, Miss Victoria Binks, Alexander, Lamartine, and Michael Angelo Binks, all began at one and the same moment to roll their eyes in such perfect time and harmony as was never equaled by any other orchestra.

"That will do!" cried Dr. Edgerly, "that will do! I see, their eyes must be very strong indeed; but what is the particular species of fish that has furnished you with this lesson, and how did you go to work to ascertain that he was in the habit of practicing this exercise?"

"Oh! 'tisn't any fish in particular, all fish do it more or less, I suppose; they couldn't see, you know, unless they kept their eyes open, and moved them round a little."

"Very true; but I should suppose no fish ever looked round quite so vigorously, unless, indeed, it was the whale that swallowed Jonah. But, pray go on, I assure you I don't know when I've heard any thing in which I've been so much interested."

"Well, sir, as perhaps you have discovered already, I am a man of leisure, having retired from business nearly four years ago; and, having nothing else to occupy me, I am able to give my whole time to the education of my children. But, pray, Dr. Edgerly, as you are a medical man, what is your opinion of sugar-coated pills?"

"Sugar-coated pills? well, if they are properly compounded, I consider them a very convenient form of medicine, especially for children, and persons of squeamish stomachs. The saccarine matter may be regarded purely as a vehicle which, being in itself perfectly harmless and innocuous, cannot—"

"Precisely, sir, that is my own opinion; the child takes medicine without knowing it. Now, this is just my system in education; in fact," and here Mr. Binks laughed a very short, dry laugh, "we might call it the sugar-coated-pill

system. Knowledge is a medicine, and, from my own experience, I may say a very bitter and disagreeable medicine. I remember very well what a scene had to be gone through with every time I had to learn a lesson; it was like taking a dose of salts or castor-oil. I resolved then, when I was a mere boy, that if I ever had any children of my own, I would find some way to make things easier than they were to me."

"And how have you succeeded? I am really anxious to learn; for the world, you know, has been trying these thousand years to find a royal road to knowledge. They've managed to smooth the old way a little, but still it's a rough, difficult path, especially at first setting out."

"I know it is, you're perfectly right, sir; but my system leaves the old road entirely on one side. The fact is, my children don't know that there is any road at all; they get there without knowing it. I am very careful to conceal from them what they are doing, never give them any lessons, nor books except to read out of, never use the word study, it's all play and amusement; and you can't think how surprised they are when they find out how much they have learned. Indeed, you would be astonished yourself to see the extent and variety of their acquirements; and if you should happen to have a spare half-hour any day this week, I should be happy to show you more of the practical operation of my system, and listen to any suggestion you might wish to offer. But what do you think of it?"

"It is certainly very ingenious," said Dr. Edgerly.

"I'm glad you think so, sir, for there is a friend of mine, Mr. Francis Fogie, a gentleman of the old school, and belonging to a very numerous and respectable family, who is of a very different opinion. In fact, he is opposed, so I tell him, to all progress and improvement; while I consider myself eminently a man of the age. He, you know, is one of the conservatives, while I am a reformer and a liberal."

"Except in woman's rights?"

"Yes! except woman's rights; I can't go that. I really can't see what women have to do with such matters; but this Mr. Fogie, I should like to have you meet him before you leave the city, for he is really quite an intelligent old gentleman, and I think you'd like him. He's a little set, that's all."

Mr. Mason to Mr. Masters. "Some of your scholars, then, are very far advanced?"

Mr. M. "Yes; I have one class of young ladies whom I have been inducting into the new philosophy, and we have found the subject very interesting. We have about finished Kant this term, and intend to take up Cousin next."

Aunt B. "What did you say that gentleman's name was, who is talking with Mr. Mason?"

Mr. D. "That? that's Mr. Masters; isn't he a beauty!"

Aunt B. "I dare say he would be if he didn't look as if he smelt something bad all the time."

Mrs. Binks. "Well, I declare! that is the way he looks exactly! but who is this Mr. Mason; do any of you know any thing about him?"

Mr. D. "I'm sure I don't; I never saw him before he ncame here. He's a confoundedly good-looking fellow though."

Miss LauraM atilda June. "Good-looking! well, some may think so; but he's dreadfully uninteresting; he hasn't hardly spoken a word to anybody since he came into the house. I wonder what he thinks men were madefor except to"—

Mr. D. "To entertain the ladies. I'll go and tell him what you say, shall I?"

Miss J. "You may, if you care enough about him, for I'm sure I don't; but Mrs. Harris, you haven't told us what he is."

Mrs. H. "I know no more than the rest of you; all I can tell you is; that he is a quiet, civil young man, and pays in advance, and makes no trouble to anyone; but there's Mr. Provender, perhaps he can tell you."

Miss J. "Oh yes! Mr. Provender knows every thing, and everybody; do Mr. Dickey, call him over here, and then we'll ask him."

Mr. D. "Hadn't I better ask Mr. Mason himself? he'll probably know best, and he'd be *so* glad to find out that you'd been talking about him!"

Miss J. "Do have done with your nonsense, and—here Mr. P., Mr. P., do tell us if you can, who this Mr. Mason

is; we're all dying with curiosity to know; that is, the rest of them are, for I can see, fast enough, that he's just nobody."

Mr. P. "Who is he? what's his business, do you mean, and all that?"

Miss J. "Yes, that's it, what's his business?"

Mr. P. "Well ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to inform you, that the young gentleman is a sculptor."

All. "A sculptor."

Mr. P. "Yes, a sculptor."

Miss J. "What! a real live sculptor? how delightful! well, I thought I discovered something very classic about his head and neck. Certainly his mouth and nose are very finely chiseled."

Mr. D. "Yes, very chiseled indeed, but you don't suppose he did it himself?"

Miss J. "Nonsense, how absurd!"

Aunt B. "What was it, the gentleman said he was?"

All, very eagerly. "A sculptor!"

Aunt B. "A sculptor, do tell; and pray what has he sculped?"

Mr. D. "Sure enough, Provender you haven't told us that, what has he sculped? scalp, sculp, sculp; pray ma'am, is that word derived from the Indian?"

Aunt B. Smiling fantastically. "I'm sure sir, I don't know; but the doctor there can tell you, I dare say."

Mr. Masters. "I have one class of young ladies, that I have been inducting into the new philosophy."

Dr. E. "The new philosophy! what's that, I don't believe we've heard of it up to Totemwell."

Mr. M. "I mean the new system of philosophy introduced by Kant and Cousin."

Dr. E. "Cant and Cousin! who may they be? I'd much rather hear of Can and cousin. But really, Mr. Masters, you must have patience with us poor country folks; we don't hear of any thing till long after the rest of the world. I believe the Magnetic Telegraph was the last discovery that reached us; this you speak of, is something I suppose much more recent."

Mr. M. "No sir, not quite so recent as that; Kant was a distinguished German philosopher, and Cousin was a Frenchman. This philosophy is sometimes called the trans-

cendental philosophy, and it has attracted a great deal of attention among scholars and literary men in this country, and in Europe of late; and I didn't know, but what you might have heard of it: I was very much interested in it myself, and"—

Dr. E. "And so you've been in—indoctrin, inducting, or what was it?—a class of young ladies into it; pray sir was it a very painful operation? did they make much resistance?"

Mr. M. "Painful! oh no sir! on the contrary, they found it very pleasant. They presented me with this pencil, at the close of the term, as a proof of their regard and appreciation of my enthusiasm; but, doctor, if you wish to look into the subject, I have the books here in the house, and you can have them at any time."

Dr. E. "Thank you, sir, but I've no great taste for philosophy of any sort, least of all for foreign productions; sad stuff it is, too, and not fit for young ladies' ears! I wonder you could dare to take the responsibility. Ruined for life they are, I dare say, every mother's son of them! if they were my children, I should be tempted to bring an action for damages."

Mr. M. "Really sir! I don't understand you; what harm is there in teaching young ladies philosophy?"

Dr. E. "Why sir, just this; that they'll never be fit for any thing again, as long they live; spoiled they are, entirely, for all useful purposes. Instead of simple, ingenuous girls, full of confiding affection, such as a man might take to his heart, you'd fill the world with monsters, that reason and argue, till they've no love left in them, that drain off their hearts into their understandings, and become so tiresomely learned and subtle and acute, that a man might as well marry a right-angled triangle, a syllogism, or in fact a whole system of logic. Foh! a woman with an argument is as bad as a boy with a drum, there's no peace in the house till she's banged it to pieces."

Mr. M. "Well sir! I should be sorry for my part to entertain so low an opinion, either of philosophy or woman; I"—

Dr. E. "Stop a moment; you may set my opinion of philosophy as low as you please; but as to woman, we should probably differ as to what a low opinion really is. Now,

if to love is better than to know, if the heart is nobler than the head, if the sensibilities are grander and sublimer than the intellect,—then is it no disparagement to woman to say, that she is adapted to the first more than to the second."

Mr. M. "Oh well! perhaps you would like to see all women like Miss Harris or Miss June; if that's your taste, you can be easily suited."

Dr. E. "No, but I would like to see them all like my young friend, Mary here; and I'm quite sure, that if you had to choose between her and such a piece of frigidity as I have described, your heart would not hesitate a single beat which to take. But if she couldn't save you, why I should have to give you up as a desperate case."

Miss J. "Well! so you've really taken pity on us at last; what have you and Mr. Redwood been talking about, all this while over in that corner?"

Miss Nancy. "Oh! about a good many things; about you for one."

Miss J. "About me! well I think it's a pity if you couldn't find any thing better'n that to talk about!"

Nan. "I thought so too; but Mr. Redwood seemed more interested in that than any thing else, so I let him have his own way."

Miss J. "The first time I guess; but of course, if you've been talking about me so long, you must have said something very important. Pray let's hear it."

Nan. "Oh yes, I dare say you'd give the world to know, but we won't tell her a word; will we, Mr. Redwood?"

Pet. "I'm sure I've forgotten what 'twas; I don't remember saying any thing about her."

Miss J. coloring excessively. "Oh no! of course he don't remember—so much more pleasantly occupied."

Nan. "You don't remember! why, Mr. Redwood! don't you know something you said?"—

Miss J. "I beg you won't trouble yourself on my account, Miss Harris! it's not of the slightest consequence, I assure you."

Nan. "Yes, but he must remember, something about a smile."

Pet. "Oh yes! I remember now."

Nan. "You know you said, you thought it was one of the sweetest you had ever seen."

Pet. "Was that it? well, I believe I did say something of the sort."

Nan. "To be sure you did; but look, Mr. Redwood, was that the smile you meant? no I don't think it was. Why can't you try again my dear? Oh yes, I think that looks more like it."

Miss J. "I've no more thoughts of smiling than yourself, I'd have you to know."

Nan. "I know you haven't my dear; but I was going to tell you something else he said. He'd been looking at you a long time without saying a word. I saw how his thoughts were occupied, and determined not to interrupt him, though I did think, he might have been a little bit more attentive to me; and all once he sighed: dear me! a furnace was nothing to it, in fact it was more like a whale than any thing I can think of. So I said, 'Mr. Redwood, why do you sigh?' Oh, said he, 'I was thinking, if I only had that smile of hers framed, and made into a picture, so that I could wear it just here, how happy I should be!'"

Pet. "Why! Miss Harris!"

Miss J. "That's a likely story! but pray Mr. Redwood, are you a good judge of daguerreotypes?"

Pet. "Yes, 'em! I've had considerable experience that way."

Miss J. "Should you know who that was taken for?"

Pet. "Certainly; I should know that a mile off."

Nan. "A smile off, you mean, Mr. Redwood. Well! I declare, if there isn't the same identical smile you were wishing for. You can have it copied just as easy as not, that is if Miss June has no objection."

Miss J. "I don't know; I hardly think t'would be proper; do you, Mrs. H.?"

Mrs. H. "Very proper indeed, Miss June; at all events, it would not be common."

Pet. "Well! I guess we'd better wait till to-morrow, and then we'll see about it."

Mr. Masters. "You have never given much attention to philosophy, I presume, Miss Grant?"

Mary, a little frightened. "Philosophy! O, no sir! I hardly know what you mean; we don't have room for such big words in our little village."

Mr. M. "So Dr. Edgerly was telling me; but I was surprised in conversing with him, to find how ignorant he appears to be. I had formed from his looks a very different opinion; in fact, I supposed him to be uncommonly intelligent, and well educated."

Ma. "Well sir, I suppose you are the first person who was ever disappointed in that way."

Mr. M. "You mean that I ought not to have expected so much?"

Ma. "No Sir! I mean that strangers generally, but especially educated men, are surprised to find that he knows so much; and that you are the first one that has been surprised at his knowing so little."

Mr. M. "Ah yes! I understand you; he has probably not been used to associate with men of very profound scholarship; though the blunders that he made, were such as could have been corrected by the merest schoolboy."

Ma. "What were they?"

Mr. M. "Why! in the first place, he had never even heard of Kant or Cousin; knew nothing of the transcendental philosophy; and then his notions about female education were so very crude and narrow, not to say ridiculous, that I had hard work not to laugh in his face."

Ma. "Well Sir, I admire your moderation; it shows, I think, that your modesty is at least equal to your merit. I do not know, of course, in what light Dr. Edgerly may have chosen to present himself to you, he is as changeable as the chameleon, and varies according to what he feeds on, and 'tisn't with every one he thinks it worth while to take the trouble of being sensible or well-informed. I am very sure he can be both when he pleases."

Dr. Edgerly. "So, ladies, you still keep together, what is there going on in this corner that has such an attraction?"

Nancy. "Oh, doctor, you don't know what you've lost. There's been such a scene between Miss June and Mr. Redwood?"

Miss June. In a languishing tone, "I'm sure, you've all of you been as stupid as you could. I don't think I was ever so dreadfully ennuied in my life."

Dr. E. "Are you? well, that's the worst weed I know of; but I suppose you know what its root is."

Mr. Dickey and Miss Nancy. "A fine! Dr. Edgerly, a fine! its against the rules."

Mr. Mason. "You don't like the city, then, very well?"

Mary. "Not so well as the country, or at least not so well as Totemwell; but I suppose there are few places as pleasant as that."

Mr. M. "I should suppose not, from what I have heard; a friend of mine, who had spent several years in your village, used to give wonderful accounts of its delightful scenery. I never heard him talk, without resolving at some time or other to visit it myself."

"What was your friend's name? Perhaps I have met him."

"Philip Hastings."

"Philip Hastings! is it possible? Are you in earnest?"

"Certainly! but why are you so much interested? Were you acquainted with him?"

"Why! I lived in the same house with him for five or six years, and should hardly have felt any differently towards him if he had been my own brother. But do tell me all you know about him, for I haven't heard a word since he went away from Totemwell; let me see, that must have been as many as eight years ago. Where did you become acquainted with him?"

"He was in my class at college, and we were at one time quite intimate. I saw him last April in Boston, and he was then talking of studying law."

"And what does he look like?"

"He looks very much like me; indeed the resemblance is so striking, that you would certainly mistake us for each other."

"And what sort of a man is he? has he altered much from what he used to be?"

"What did he use to be?"

"Well, I remember, though I don't suppose I ever gave two thoughts to it at the time, that he was very generous and good-natured; that is, 'most always, for sometimes he was so different that I never knew what to make of it. For

weeks together, he'd be as kind and gentle as a kitten, and would do any thing I asked; and then there'd come a day—nobody could give any reason for it—when I didn't dare to go near him, when every thing seemed to vex him, and the more I tried to coax him, the more he wouldn't be coaxed."

"I'm afraid this description would apply to him now quite as well as it did then, but what else?"

"He was dreadfully obstinate."

"Yes, he is now, but it's not a very flattering portrait you have drawn of him, you couldn't love him, of course, with such faults as these?"

"But I did love him very dearly, exactly as if he had been my own brother. And"—

"You loved him, then, simply as a brother; I don't believe it would give him much pleasure to hear that."

"Oh no; for I suppose he has forgotten me long before this."

"Forgotten you! no, indeed! I don't believe it's possible for any one to forget you; at any rate, he has not. He used often to speak of you."

"How? in what way?"

"Sometimes hopefully, as if he felt sure of meeting you once again; but oftener, as of a delicious dream that was suddenly broken off never to be continued. He always seemed to look back with a fond melancholy upon the years he spent in Totemwell, as the fairest part of his existence; and I have heard him say, more than once, that he never expected to be so happy again."

"Yes, I remember he used to be very happy in his books and sports."

"It was something more than books and sports that drew his thoughts so often backward to your quiet village; they are very good in their way, but they cannot fill the soul of a man. It was a gentle girl, bright-eyed and dark-haired, that he left there ripening into a perfect woman: he used to wonder whether she would be as beautiful when she grew up; and for me, I wonder whether she could have been as beautiful when a child. Do not be angry, for remember he was but a boy, and so am I."

"It seems so strange he should remember me so long! do men always remember so well?"

"I think not; but then, you know, he was romantic as a school-girl, always dreaming impossible things, living in a land of the wildest fantasies and delusions. Superstitious he was too; and in the bottom of his heart he nursed a foolish fancy that your fate and his were united, and must sometime or other come together."

"And what is he doing now?"

"Nothing."

"And what is he going to do?"

"Everything."

"Is that his character?"

"Yes! he's nothing or everything, as the mood strikes him. He's worse than a lunatic, for, whereas, they are supposed to be governed by the moon, he is governed by nothing. As I told you before, when I saw him in Boston, he was thinking of studying law; the next thing, he'll be talking of medicine; and then of going to California, Australia, or the Lord knows where. He never can stick anywhere, any more than a sphere on an inclined plane. In short, he has no ruling passion.

"Why! I should have supposed that he would be very ambitious."

"And so he is, as Milton's Satan; but he's everything else as well. His ambition is no stronger than his love of ease and pleasure. But the great trouble, after all, is his inconstancy; he's 'everything by fits, and nothing long.' Now he has a fit of ambition, and you'd think he was going to swallow the world—then he has a fit of religion, and all his talk is of the shortness and vanity of life—next comes a fit of taste and luxury, and then he's a very Sybarite in all sensual delights. Patchwork! mere patchwork! you can never make a decent coat."

"But he must work in order to live."

"No, there's the mischief of it, a rich uncle has adopted him, and he no longer feels the pinch of necessity. If it wasn't for that, I should have some hopes yet. But what motive can we find to make a man work, who has all this world can give; who thinks this world can give nothing; who shrinks with the most morbid shyness from competition with others, or from depending on their good will; who thinks fame worth having only when one is young; who

sees that men are grasshoppers, yet burns to be the biggest grasshopper of all?"

"I know of no motives, except those that the Bible teaches. I believe they are strong enough for any effort."

"Yes, the Bible; but suppose one doesn't believe; suppose his faith is as inconstant as all the rest of his being; that the words life, death, good, evil, God, Heaven and hell, change like the colored beads of a kaleidoscope, or rather, I should say kakeidoscope—suppose that he would gladly do something to benefit his fellows, but doesn't know how; is afraid to preach up any doctrine, because he cannot preach from his heart; in short, is driven from whatever he undertakes, by cowardly doubts and fears. There is no strength without faith!"

"And for that very reason, he should seek faith first of all."

"But where can he find it?"

"By reading and praying; but most of all, by doing. He that does a single right action, has done more to strengthen his faith than by a year of study."

He sinks his head on his breast; Mary looks at him a few moments, then goes softly away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MORE OF MRS. HARRIS—SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

The next morning, Mr. Provender took Dr. Edgerly mysteriously aside, and informed him that most of the boarders intended leaving town a few weeks, during the hot weather; but, before going, they contemplated making a handsome present to their landlady, Mrs. Harris; and wished to know whether it would be agreeable to him and his companions to be present on the occasion. The doctor cheerfully assented, and soon after set out to call again on Mr. Daventry.

The same servant came to the door, and very much the same conversation took place, as on the former interview, the doctor acquiring no additional information, but a very considerable addition of doubt and perplexity. As he turned the corner into Broadway, a little boy, in a lamentable voice, begged for a penny. Now, I am sorry to say that Dr. Edgerly, though he had never been rich, had not yet learned the value of money. Perhaps this was the very reason; for how can one be supposed to know the value of what he has never had? Whereas, rich men, those who have the most of it, seem thoroughly to understand its value, and seldom part with it except for an equivalent. But Dr. Edgerly, poor simple soul, who never understood the breeding of that sort of cattle, and, like as not, thought it unworthy of him to play pander to dimes or dollars, very foolishly gave the boy a shilling. To be sure, if the boy's story were half true, he needed all the doctor could spare; and if it were half false, he had told lies enough for his money, cheap as that commodity usually is.

But the doctor having given the boy a shilling, felt his faith in him wonderfully confirmed; and so, having nothing else to do, he resolved to accompany him to that home he had described so pathetically, and if he should find his story true, to furnish the suffering family with such further

aid as his own limited means would allow. It was in Laurens Street, in the very worst part of that filthy thoroughfare that the boy at length paused; then, nimbly leaping over a reeking gutter, he precipitated himself down a flight of narrow wooden steps, into some subterranean chasm below, followed, more cautiously, by his companion. We will omit all description of this wretched lodging, and come to the human actors, or sufferers rather—dreadfully human they were, and no spark of their divinity apparently remaining. Though long used to distress, Dr. Edgerly could not help being powerfully affected by the scene before him, where poverty and drunkenness, disease and death, left no feature of horror to the imagination. A man, apparently fifty years of age, though he was probably much younger, was sitting upon the bag of straw that served them for a bed, in the first stage of intoxication. Something that had once been a woman, rocked itself slowly back and forth in the single rickety chair, clasping in its arms, with unnecessary violence, a withered infant; and breaking out now and then, into snatches of old songs and laughter, such as dead men laugh. Thrown aside in one corner, like a broken pitcher, lay the body of a little child.

"Home so soon, eh! give me the money," cried the woman, grasping the boy so fiercely by the arm, that he winced with pain. "Give me the money, I say."

"Don't you do such a thing, Jemmy," cried the father, "but bring it to me like a good boy, or"—and he shook his fist as he spoke—"I'll break every bone in your body, and set 'em for you too." Ha, ha, ha! that's a good joke; though they say a joke breaks no bones; ha, ha! Ah sir good morning, 'am happy to see you. Susan, give the, gentleman a chair; or, perhaps he would prefer a seat on the sofa; and how is Mrs. Loblolly, this morning? hope the children are all well, cunning little rogues; and what news do you bring of my little favorite, Master Tommy? Ah, Mr. Loblolly, you're the happiest man I know of; such a family one don't see every day.

"You don't remember me, eh? no, I suppose not, 'tis a common failing."

"'When misfortune o'ertakes us,
Each false one forsakes us,
And leaves us to sink and to struggle alone.'

But do you know, sir, what friends are like? Then I'll tell you; they're like Lapland ice, there is most of it where it's least wanted; but did you ever see a lot o' fellows leaning against the sunny side of a house, to hold it up, of course, with their hands in their pockets; but if the wall begins to totter, ever so little, how they run, and chuckle at their wisdom!"

"I suppose from your language that you have been in better circumstances," replied Dr. Edgerly.

"'Circumstances alter cases,' so they say, and I believe they do. I used to be in the possessive case myself, but now I'm decidedly objective—objected to, at any rate—an object of charity;

"'Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun.'"

"It seems to me," said the doctor, "that you and I have met before; pray, what is your name?"

"My name, sir? and what would you do with my name? steal it, eh?

"'He that steals my purse, steals trash—
But he that filches—'

but hold,

"'My name is Norval, on the Grampian hills—'
'So call him now,
His former name is heard no more in'—

Broadway.

"'See how they glide, with steps so light,
The ladies fair, and beaux so bright,
Along Broadway!
See all the doors wide open fly,
And gaping clerks, as we go by
Along Broadway.
What bliss were mine, with coat so fine,
And hat so sleek, the stream to join
Along Broadway!
But now no more, ah! bitter fate!
That coat and hat perambulate
Along Broadway.
Ah! well a-day! in heaven above,
Who knows but I may still make love
Along Broadway?'

There's more of the same sort; but that'll do; and now, sir, what's your will? what's your ache?—toothache, ear-

ache, headache, or the great ache of aches, heartache?—bring on your potatoes, if you want 'em dug; yes, I'll drown 'em all like so many kittens. Pour enough of this down your throat, and they'll be off as quick as rats quit a sinking ship."

"Your name, sir," cried Dr. Edgerly, "what is your name?"

"My name, sir, is Dr. Frederick Douglas, at your service, M. D. I hope, sir, you are in no need of my services; but, if you, are, why, sir, it's the common lot of humanity, and I shall be most happy to serve you."

The manner in which this speech was delivered was so incongruous with the whole appearance of the stranger, that Dr. Edgerly, under different circumstances, could hardly have restrained a smile; but, as it was, every other emotion was swallowed up in the surprise and horror with which he discovered that the wreck before him was no other than the once brilliant and admired Douglas, the friend whose life he had saved, whom he had afterwards found unworthy, and who now seemed paying, by the most awful retribution, the full penalty of his ingratitude. Dr. Edgerly was human; and I will not deny that, at first, a momentary flush of triumph and revengeful satisfaction spread over his heart at seeing one who had so basely injured him thus fearfully humbled. He stood still a few moments, with his arms folded on his breast, and gazed fixedly into the bloated face of Douglas, as if striving to trace there the once handsome features; while the recollection of their former friendship, of all he had then done, and suffered, and enjoyed, brought a mist into his eyes. He remembered the splendid mansion where they had last met, and compared its costly furniture, and all its store of wealth and luxury, with the filth and nakedness and squalor of all around him.

"Oh, Douglas, Douglas!" he exclaimed, and the mist thickened into rain as he spoke, "and has it come to this? and is there really such a gulf between us? Has the friend I once loved, and whom I feel I could still love, turned into such a rotten corpse? and is that his wife? and are those his children? Heavens! suppose they were mine. And I was envying him his riches! God forgive me!"

"What!" cried Douglas, staggering up to him, and putting his face close to his; "a tear, two tears, for me! then

I am not quite the wretched, worthless thing I had supposed. But who are you, that have tears so plenty that you can waste them on the desert?"

"My name is Edgerly,—William Edgerly."

"Edgerly! I knew a man of that name once; he was the best friend I ever had; the *only* friend I ever had; but I lost him, and never found another."

"How did you lose him?"

"I didn't lose him; I threw him away; I didn't know his value. I thought friends were as plenty as blackberries."

"If you had a friend now, could he save you?"

"A friend save me! I tell you God Almighty couldn't save me. If one should come at this moment with heaven in one hand, and a glass of brandy in the other, and hell at the bottom, I could no more help drinking that brandy than I could cease to be!"

"But it wasn't always so; how came you in this condition?"

"I married a rich wife—there she is; I jest, and she laughs all day long. Oh, we are a merry couple!—that is, her father was rich, and she was an only child; so I thought, of course, we should have it all some time or other; and we lived in style, and her father failed; we lost every thing; my practice went to the devil, where many of my patients had gone before; and my only satisfaction is, I shall find them both before long. Though, do you know, I sometimes think there's no doctors there?"

"Where?"

"There! down there!"

"Why not?"

"Oh, because, you know, they'd have depopulated the infernal regions before this. Trust me, if ever I get a chance, I'll give the old boy a dose he won't get over in a hurry."

"But your son; are you willing that he should grow up to become what you are?"

"That's his look out. God made him, and not I; they two must settle it between them, that is, unless the devil chooses to have a hand in the business. You needn't suppose I'm going to have him standing on my shoulders."

"Will you give him to me?"

"Give him to you!" cried the woman fiercely, for the first time, apparently, discovering that there was a stranger in the apartment; "give you my own darling Jemmy!—a pretty friend you are, ain't you, to separate a child from his parents? and do you suppose he'd be so ungrateful and undutiful as to go to heaven without his dear father and mother? Come here, Jemmy," and folding her arms about the poor frightened child, she began to weep over and fondle him with maudlin affection. The wretched father, beginning now to feel more powerfully the effect of the liquor he had drunk, had fallen into a drunken stupor, and Dr. Edgerly, seeing that nothing more could be done at present, was compelled reluctantly to withdraw. He was glad to find himself in the open air, but did not breathe easily until he had left Laurens street far behind, and came out into the forgetful life and bustle and magnificence of Broadway.

On arriving at his boarding-house, he described the scene he had just witnessed to Miss June, though without mentioning his former acquaintance with Douglas, expecting that his narration would awaken her liveliest sympathy and horror. She listened languidly, however, only exclaiming, "How shocking!" when he came to speak of the dead body; and when he had finished, she replied, "It is really dreadful that folks will permit such things to be done; but I wonder, doctor, that you should think of giving any thing to street beggars! everybody knows they're impostors."

"Certainly," chimed in Mr. Binks, who sat there reading the morning's paper, "it's against the law, and "—

"Yes, I know; I remember reading once a story of the City of Golden Palaces, where poverty was a crime punishable by death; but I never knew till I came to New York that it was any thing more than a pleasant fiction. Now I see it's not so very far from the truth."

"Yes, but then, beggars are so provoking!" cried Miss Nancy; "they always station themselves at the doors of the confectioners, and then, when one is just going in to eat an ice cream, you know, or some little innocent luxury, they're sure to start up, like some horrible dragon, or the lions we used to read about in the Pilgrim's Progress, just as if they

grudged us the pleasure, or thought we ought to give the money to them, instead of wasting it upon our sinful appetites. I declare I can't tell how many ice creams they've spoilt for me in that way, and I wish the city would pass a law that they should stand somewhere else. I wouldn't mind giving them a sixpence, now and then, as a kind of hush money, you know, if they'd leave me in peace the rest of the time."

"Just so!" cried Mr. Binks, "nor I either; but the worst of it is, you don't know whether they're really deserving, they're such monstrous liars."

"Yes!" added Miss June, "there was that story in the paper the other day, you know, cautioning"—

"Pray, don't tell me any more," cried the doctor, "or I shall never give away a penny again, with any satisfaction, as long as I live. Suppose they don't deserve it, it does me as much good as if they did. This street charity is like a Chinese dinner: you musn't ask too many questions, for if you know all, you'll most likely lose your appetite. But if I have feasted heartily on bow-wow, supposing it to be quack-quack, what harm has it done? or who would thank a friend for informing him of his error?"

"Yes, but it's such an encouragement to them, if one ever gives them any thing; I really don't think we ought to do it!"

"And pray, Miss June, don't they need encouragement? answer me that;" cried the doctor, placing himself directly in front of that lady. "If they don't, I wonder who does."

Miss June could not answer this ingenious sophism, and so the victory remained with Dr. Edgerly.

It is now time to return to Mary and Aunt Bethany, who had set out early in the forenoon, on their long contemplated expedition among the dry-good stores that line Broadway. As Mrs Harris was in want of a new dress and a variety of house-keeping articles, she determined to improve the same opportunity. Mr. Binks was going down town, to hear the news and collect his dividends; Peter was intent on seeing sights; and Mr. Mason professed to have business of urgent importance, to call him in the same direction. So, as they say in old stories, they all went along

together. The whole party were in excellent spirits, but Nancy was, as her mother declared, in a perfect gale; and though Mr. Binks, who was himself an exceeding grave and decorous personage, made several attempts to check this unseemly behavior by putting on a series of his most awful frowns, his gravity was entirely thrown away upon the little lady, or rather seemed to increase her mirth, till at length an accident, which he evidently regarded as a manifest interposition of Providence, came to his relief.

The stage at first rolled quietly enough down Broadway, dodging from side to side, and trying to establish telegraphic communication with hurrying pedestrians down the long vistas of Waverley place, of Amity, and Bleecker; but no one gave an answering signal; and the driver at length, disgusted with their stupidity or ingratitude, turned with a sort of pensive melancholy to his horses, and looked anxiously forward to the South Ferry as the goal of all his hopes. The air was close, and Nancy wished to lower the window behind her; but her strength was unequal to the effort, and all the gentlemen, as in duty bound, sprang at once to her assistance. Mr. Binks, being the nearest, was the happy man, and leaning gracefully forward, as one always does in an omnibus, he applied his hands one on each side of the window, and—

"Why Mr. Binks! how you are hugging me!" cried Nancy—whereupon the omnibus laughed till the tears came into its eyes; while little Mr. Binks, the very pattern of propriety, and who was never known to kiss his own wife before folks, and never, it was shrewdly surmised, did it at all except after so much formality that his kisses were of no more account than a buckwheat cake fried a week ago, when everybody knows they ought both to be served up hot from the griddle,—sank back aghast into his seat, so utterly confounded by the shock that for several minutes he could find no words to express his mortification.

"I'm sure!" at length he stammered, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, "I didn't mean—I'd no such intention—I'll leave it to you, Mr. Redwood; you saw the whole of it; did you, sir, discover any—any impropriety, any indelicacy in my manner towards Miss Harris? I wouldn't for the world be guilty of"—

"Ah, never mind," cried Nancy, "it's all over now, and I shouldn't have cared if it hadn't been in an omnibus; if you'll only remember, the next time, and do it when nobody's looking."

"Yes, but my dear Miss Harris, why won't you believe me when I assure you that I wasn't meaning any such thing? Why, I never did such a thing in my life, it's entirely foreign to my character."

"I know you've always been so careful before, I own I didn't expect you'd go to doing it in Broadway."

"Yes, but I wouldn't do it anywhere, I—" but here the unfortunate Binks was interrupted in his defense, which he would else undoubtedly have continued all the way to the Park, by the accident already hinted. The stage had reached the Perrine pavement, or Broadway Hell-gate, that was at that time such an honor to our city, and had jolted safely over the greater part of it, when just as the driver began to congratulate himself on the sight of smooth water beyond, crash went the off hind wheel, the horses pranced, the driver yelled, and instantly, as if some one had actually sown a dragon's teeth on the spot, there sprang up such a crop of men and boys, that where they came from no mortal could tell.

Mr. Mason sprang to the ground at the first alarm, and assisted Mary to alight in safety, but owing to their own fright and the violence of the horses, the rest of the party were not so fortunate. Peter came first, but stumbling in his haste, he was thrown flat on the pavement, and each in turn shared the same fate, the now more than ever unfortunate Binks crowning the catastrophe by coming plump on the equally unfortunate Mrs. Harris. Yet, even in that moment of peril, her presence of mind did not forsake her; she made no effort indeed to rise, for that she knew to be impossible, but turning her cold gray eye, now, however, blazing like a comet, full upon her hapless daughter, she exclaimed, in tones that went to the heart of every woman present, "Why! Nancy Harris! look at your bonnet!"

"I know it, mother mine," replied Nancy, from under Aunt Bethany! "now mayn't I have a new one?"

"Yes, child, yes, but take better care another time."

"And if I fall out of an omnibus, do it more gracefully.

Well, I'll try and do my best, but I'm afraid it 'ill take a good deal of practice."

As it turned out, on closer examination, that no bones were broken, and indeed no more serious injury sustained by any one than what had befallen Nancy's bonnet, the party soon recovered its good humor, and, taking passage on board another stage, they talked, and laughed, and joked each other about their accident all the way down to Stewart's, where they composed their features into an expression of gravity more becoming to that magnificent establishment. Peter and Mr. Mason also went in and stayed a few minutes, the former to "look round," and the latter to buy a pair of gloves. The ladies, however, remained at least an hour, making a variety of purchases, and feasting their eyes on that perfect heaven of delights that is there unfolded for their sole solace and gratification. When they could look no longer from mere fatigue, Aunt Bethany and Mrs. Harris rode home together; but the young ladies preferred to walk a part of the way, that they might see the shop windows as they went along.

"I'm afraid it isn't agoing to rain after all," said Mary, "in spite of Mr. Provender's prediction. I didn't believe it would then."

"But you don't want it to rain do you?" said Nancy.

"Why yes, to be sure I do; here we've brought our umbrellas, and nobody else has thought of such a thing, and I think it's a pity if we can't have at least a shower."

"Why, you wicked creature! now, that would have done well enough for me to say, but I never should have thought it of you. But let's go in here to Taylor's a moment;" and before Mary knew what she was about, she found herself seated at a little table in the most beautiful room she thought she had ever seen, with a great many other little tables, and a crowd of well-drest men and women keeping up an uninterrupted Babel, and contriving, at the same time, to dispose of a sufficient quantity of cake and ice cream to have carried that famous monument to a far greater height than was ever dreamed by its founders.

"What will you have?" cried Nancy; "but I forget, you don't know how to choose, and I shall have to choose for you. You'll take ice cream, of course, this dreadful hot

day, in fact I walked as much for that as for any thing else; and then we must try some of their delicious almond cake; you'll like that I know; and in the mean time we can be thinking what else we'd fancy."

"Oh, that's enough for once, I should think. I can't bear a great deal you know."

"No, I suppose not, after living all your life on cows' milk and Johnny cake; but you'll soon get used to it, or would if you'd only stay in New York a little longer. How provoking 'tis that you're going away so soon, for I like you amazingly; for, to tell you the truth, without flattery, you're only the least bit countryfied in the world. I really don't believe I should have found you out if I'd only seen you, and hadn't heard you talk; and after you get your new dresses you can pass muster almost anywhere."

"Do you think, then, that it is so much better to be cityfied than countryfied, as you call it?"

"To be sure I do, and so does everybody else; country folks are so stupid and tiresome,—sort o' goody, you know,—that there's no comfort of your lives where they are. Now, you are good—good as strawberries and cream, and innocent as a new-laid egg, and think, I dare say, that 'I'se dreadful wicked,' as Topsy says; and so I am; but I like you for all that, and would be like you if I could, only it's too much trouble, and I couldn't do it either, so I shan't try, not this year, at any rate. But there's your Aunt Bethany, with all reverence be it spoken,—you needn't fire up so,—she's dreadful goody, and it's no use to deny it. But she's a good-natured old soul as ever lived, so I don't mind it; but, there are some pious folks, you know, that think it a sin to speak above a whisper, or except through the nose, this way, you know. There was one to-day in the omnibus, while I was carrying on so, and I could see his lips going all the time, just as if he were saying, 'You'll go to the wicked place for this, you'll go to the wicked place for this!' with a grim and grizzly sort o' smile, as if he enjoyed it amazingly. But ain't you confounded, now, to hear me run on at this rate, and me a church member too?"

"Are you?"

"To be sure I am, and have been any time these forty years, and you never knew it! Much good it does one; but

I see, there's the goody peeping out of you; you think I ought not to talk in this way, and no more I ought; but, there, I hate a hypocrite, and never could pretend to be a bit better than I am. I wish I could say as much of Taylor's ice cream to-day, 'tisn't near as good as usual; but come, if you won't take any thing more, let's go. But I want to tell you one thing; don't say a word, after we get home, about our going in here, will you?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, because mother has got a foolish notion that it isn't proper for young ladies to go in there alone, and she might take it into her head to give me a scolding."

"But why didn't you tell me of that before? I'm sure I wouldn't have gone in there on any account."

"I know you wouldn't, and that's the very reason I didn't tell you; but, don't now, dear, look so sober about it; if you do, I shall think you are angry, and then I shall cry. I'm sure I'm sorry as can be; though I hope you don't suppose I'd do any thing really improper; young ladies go there alone every day."

"Then how came your mother to forbid it?"

"Oh, she didn't forbid it; she only said she wished I wouldn't; but old people, you know, always have some strange notion or other, that they can't give any reason for. But, there, I declare, I wanted to buy me a tooth-brush, and I forgot all about it. Never mind, we'll go in here to Scott and Drummond's. But don't let my mother know we've been in there! it would be worse than Taylor's, a great deal."

"Well," cried Mary, laughing, "I wonder where else you are going to carry me. I desire to get home as soon as possible, for I don't see but all Broadway is forbidden ground. But what objection has your mother to this place?"

"Some dispute or other about some spoons or silver forks, I don't know which. She said they charged her a dollar more than they'd agreed, and they came near having a downright quarrel. My mother, as perhaps you know, is a very decided character, and doesn't get over a thing of that sort very easily; so she declared she would never set

foot inside the store again, and gave us all strict orders never to go there either."

"Then why do you?"

"For that very reason, I suppose; I've a spice of opposition in me, and love dearly to do what I'm ordered not; besides, it's one of the most fashionable stores in the city, and they're always very attentive. But I see you've lost all faith in my guidance, and I think we have walked far enough: so we may as well ride the rest of the way."

They accordingly got into an omnibus, and, without any further accident, arrived at home, where Nancy seemed trying, by her kind and obliging behavior, to efface any unfavorable impression her former levity might have produced upon Mary. Scarcely, however, had they thrown off their bonnets, and seated themselves by the open window, to enjoy the faint breeze that began already to move from the south—Nancy thoughtfully rubbing the soft brush over the ends of her fingers, and having, at the same time, her eyes fixed, with an arch, inquiring expression, upon Mary,—when the voice of Mrs. Harris was heard from below, calling "Nancy, Nancy Harris," in a tone of considerable excitement. She stopped, and called again, when half way up the stairs, for Mrs. Harris being, as we have said, rather a portly dame, could not climb and cry at once; and at this second summons, Nancy went into the entry, and leaning over the bannisters, replied, "I hear; and what does it want of its 'ittle darling?"

"You've been to that odious Scott and Drummond's; and you ought to be ashamed of yourself. I"—but here Nancy ran back into her room, and throwing herself on the bed, seemed about to choke herself with excess of laughter.

"She's found it out already;" she cried, at length, "and, if she wasn't my mother, I should say she was a witch; but, at any rate, she must have dealings with witches, for here we've hardly got into the house, and she comes to me about that the very first thing."

"What do you mean," she added, with the utmost gravity, as her mother entered the chamber, "by saying we'd been to Scott and Drummond's?"

"Oh, you needn't go to denying it; you can't deceive me; I know all about it; and I say, again, you ought to be

ashamed of yourself to go there, after they'd behaved so shabbily."

"But what's put it into your head so, all of a sudden, that I've been there, when you know very well that I'm not in the habit of doing any such thing? Really you are getting to be so suspicious that there's no peace of one's life."

"Now, do look at her little innocent face; wouldn't you suppose, Miss Grant, that she'd never done any thing out of the way in her life? And there she sits, looking for all the world as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth; just as if she didn't know, and I didn't know, and she didn't know that I knew, that she'd been to Scott and Drummond's, and bought a tooth-brush, this very morning. Yes, a tooth-brush, Miss Nancy; and what have you got to say now, I wonder?"

"Oh, well, if it's come to that, I may as well own up; but I won't confess—I'll die first, unless you promise to tell us who told you."

"Nobody told me."

"You heard some one talking about it, then?"

"Not a syllable."

"You surely didn't see us? You haven't been down town all this hot day?"

"No; I have been at home these two hours."

"Then how, under the sun, did you find out?"

"Oh, there are ways enough. Did you ever do any thing I didn't find out?"

"Yes; once."

"What was it, pray?"

"Oh, yes; you'd like to have me betray myself, I dare say, and so make my truth a liar. But, say, how did you find out that I'd been to Scott and Drummond's? It's too bad to keep us in suspense any longer."

Mrs. Harris made no answer; but simply held out, for Nancy's inspection, a small bit of paper, a shop bill, in short, with Scott and Drummond printed on it, in large, honest letters.

"Sure enough; how stupid it was in me to throw that out the window; I might have known the wind would have carried it into the dining-room; but how did you discover that it was a tooth-brush?"

"By the creases," replied Mrs. Harris; and with an air of triumph, she sailed out of the room, leaving Nancy to digest her humiliation the best way she could.

"Did you ever see the beat of that?" she exclaimed. "I declare I never felt so cheap in my life. But, there, wickedness never did prosper with me. I've a great mind to turn over a new leaf, and become a very pink of perfection—only, I'm afraid I shouldn't hold out,—and then, perhaps somebody 'd write a book about me,—what a good little girl she was, that always minded her mother, never told a lie, or tore her frock, loved dearly to read in the hymn-book, better than to eat her dinner, and how she died, and went to heaven; or, as we children used to end all our good stories, 'lived in peace, and died in grease.' Heigh ho! Well, I wonder if 'tisn't 'most time for dinner."

After dinner, through the kindness of Mr. Binks, Dr. Edgerly was made still farther acquainted with his system of instruction. The hint already given, will show its most striking features. It was, in fact, a system of perpetual surprises, and in contriving these consisted the crowning merit of the invention. The little Binkses, in the presence of Mr. Binks, were kept in a state of constant alarm. They knew not but what they might tumble every moment into some horrid pitfall of grammar or geography, or be tripped up by some dreadful question in arithmetic or chemistry. They had taken sugar-coated pills so often, that they began to suspect every lump of sugar they saw. If Mr. Binks told them a story, they were all in a fidget, lest they should miss the moral, which they were sure must be lurking somewhere about the premises; or, perhaps, it was a fact in history or natural philosophy they were to smell out, and take captive. Mr. Binks also dealt largely in puzzles and enigmas, in which the Sphynx was a bungler, compared to him; and on these occasions, the little Binkses resembled nothing so much as a litter of half-grown kittens, who, having perchance espied some gray-headed rat peeping warily from its hole, seem at once oppressed with a fearful joy.

In the evening Mr. Fogie came in and spent an hour, much to the satisfaction of the worthy doctor; but I am sorry that my limits will not permit me to give any account of their conversation.

Nor can I even stop to describe the imposing ceremonies that took place on occasion of the presentation. Suffice it to say that, according to the unanimous opinion of the company, such a time had never been known in that house before. Mr. Dickey was very dignified, Mr. Provender very eloquent, and Mrs. Harris very grateful. But appearances are sometimes deceptive.

"If they'd only given me half a dozen silver forks," said that lady, "there'd have been some sense in it; but that good-for-nothing basket—"

"I'm sure," said Nancy, "it's as good a thing to laugh by as one could desire; I shall never see it without thinking of that dear, good, ridiculous Mr. Provender. I never felt so relieved in my life as when he got through; I expected every minute to see him burst with vanity, and I wanted to stick pins into him, so that I didn't know what to do. And all the time that unhappy little hedgehog, Mr. Masters, was like to expire with envy to think he had not been invited to make a speech too."

"This Mr. Redwood seems quite a nice young man."

"Yes, very, quite."

"They say he is very rich."

"What they?"

"Why, Mrs. Grant—but I thought you liked him, I'm sure you've given him encouragement enough."

"Too much, perhaps; but, mother, don't for mercy's sake ever mention his name to me again, for sometimes I think I hate him, yes, I hate him; I wish he had never come inside this house!"

"Why, Nancy Harris! what has he done now? but I see how it is, it's that good-for-nothing Dickey; you can't get him out of your head."

"I don't care for Mr. Dickey any more than you do; but pray don't talk any more, my head aches as if it would burst."

The family were now all snug in bed, and all the lights extinguished except in the chamber of Mr. Mason, who, having just commenced Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," was unable to tear himself from the intoxicating pages of that delicious writer, and continued to turn leaf after leaf till his light suddenly failing, first made him aware of the lateness of the hour. At that moment the smell of fire attracted his

attention. He opened the door—it was too true—there was the lazy, skulking, perfidious smoke; now for the bold but cruel flame!

Fire! fire! fire!

The alarm was fearful and sudden, but it was as soon over; an ash-barrel in the cellar had caused all the mischief, and no sooner was it extinguished, and the danger past, than each one regained sufficient courage to deny that he had ever lost it, and to banter his companions on their needless fears.

"But where is Mr. Binks?" cried Mr. Dickey. "I'll warrant he has slept through it all, or perhaps,—but here they come now. Well, Miss Vic., and what do you think of this for a bonfire, eh? but, bless me! how's this? I thought 'twas Victoria: how in the world, Mr. Lamartine, did you happen to put on your sister's clothes? She took yours first? Sure enough, so she has, and she's got 'em on hind side afore! Oh! hold on to me somebody, I shall die; this is too rich! ha! ha! ha!"

"But where is Mr. Binks?" demanded Mrs. Harris, as Mrs. Binks entered the parlor.

"Oh! do run some of you," returned Mrs. Binks, "and tell him it's all out; he's tying the bed clothes together, and"—but before she had time to finish the sentence, the whole family rushed, shrieking with laughter, towards Mrs. Binks's apartments; but, on entering, its unhappy occupant was nowhere to be found.

"Where in the world can he have gone to?"

"Help me up! help me up!" cried a lamentable voice from the window.

"Oh! here he is;" said Mr. Dickey, in a state of intense excitement, "catch hold here, some of you, and we'll have him up in a trice. Pull gently, steady now; it's to be hoped the sheets won't tear; but who'd have thought he was so heavy? Here, take hold of the sash, that's it; why, Mr. Binks, I'd as lief pull in a halibut; but that's what I call looking round like a fish with a vengeance. What under the sun, moon, and seven stars were you doing out there at this time o' night?"

"And how, in the name of common sense, did you expect to reach the ground with a rope that wouldn't reach half way? And why couldn't you have walked down stairs as

well? Well, practice makes perfect, and next time you'll do better."

"Why—why—isn't the house on fire?"

"House on fire? no, nor never has been; but, suppose it was, is that any reason you should leave your wife and children to be burnt to a cinder? I should never have thought that of you, Mr. Binks."

"I had no thought of leaving them; I only went down first to see if I'd made the rope long enough, and then I couldn't get up again; and if you hadn't come when you did, I couldn't have held out much longer. But how did Mrs. Binks and the children appear? I hope they showed no want of coolness and self-possession."

"Ah, admirably! admirably! at least as to the coolness; I can't say so much as to the self-possession, for they seemed to have lost themselves entirely. I'm afraid they'll never come right; but what do you think of your system now, sir; don't you think it needs some patching?"

"Perhaps it may, a little, doctor; I should be glad to talk with you in the morning about it, and see what we can do. It hasn't worked this time, I confess, quite as well as I expected, but practice"—

"Practice makes perfect," cried Michael Angelo, half asleep.

The day after the presentation—I find I am already falling into the habit of the family of referring all events to this important epoch—Mr. and Mrs. Binks and all the little Binkses went a hundred miles into the country for the fresh air; Mr. Masters went fifty miles on Long Island for the salt water, and Miss June, who didn't care either for air or water, went to visit some friend or friends in Newark. Their departure spread a sensible gloom over the household, and even Nancy seemed to abate somewhat of her usual gaiety; but our Totemwellians were too busy to be much affected by these changes. As Aunt Bethany said, they were on the go from morning till night; for there were so many things to see, so many things to buy, and so many commissions to execute, that it seemed as if they never would be done.

They took a trip to Hoboken; they took another to Greenwood; they scaled the summit of the Reservoir; look-

ed up at High Bridge, and down from Trinity, and filled up the chinks and crannies by going to concerts, and riding here, there, and everywhere in omnibuses till they became as well known to the whole race of drivers as the man with the little yellow dog. The entire merit of this activity belonged to Peter, who was not only bent on seeing all there was to be seen himself, but equally bent on having the others see it with him. He possessed the most remarkable instinct for finding out remarkable places; so that Dr. Edgerly, who had lived four years in the city, was, as Peter declared, as green as a gosling, in comparison.

In the midst of all these employments, Dr. Edgerly did not lose sight of the main object of their journey. Every morning he repeated his visit to Twentieth Street, again and again to receive the same answer, till the face of the old black servant became so familiar that the doctor could, tell from his expression, whether his master had returned the moment he opened the door. But, on Friday morning, the bell had hardly ceased its jangling, when a set of the very whitest teeth, and a pair of eyes that might have given a lesson to Mr. Binks, appeared in the door, giving promise of welcome tidings.

"Ah, good morning, sir; I was expecting you'd be here to-day, sir; walk in, sir; Mr. Daventry have arrove last night, sir. He am very much fatigued and prostervated by de journey, and am just eatin' his breakfass, but he will proceed to wait on you directly, sir."

Dr. Edgerly took his seat by one of the tables; and, as he did so, his eye fell on a letter, directed to Mr. Daventry, in a handwriting with which he thought he was familiar. He took it up, and, looking at the postmark, found, to his great surprise, that it was from Totemwell.

"Deacon Redwood! can it be? does he know? what mystery is this? some new villainy I'm afraid. I"— but at this moment a door of French glass opened at the farther end of the parlor, and a gentleman entered with a sauntering air, dressed in a rich morning-gown and slippers.

"Your name is Edgerly, I believe; my servant tells me you have called several times; so I suppose it's something of importance to one or the other of us. Which may it be?"

"It is not of the slightest importance to me, Mr. Daventry, except so far as I am interested in another; but to you, unless I am much mistaken, it is of the highest. You had a brother, I believe, who died some years ago, had you not?"

"Yes, sir, I had such a brother."

"Was he ever married?"

"Excuse me, sir; but I supposed you came to communicate information, not to gain it."

"Very well, I will answer the question myself; your brother was married, and left one daughter. Mrs. Daventry died some fifteen years ago, on her way to visit her father, while her husband was absent in South America; but her daughter Mary is still living. She has been residing, ever since her mother's death, in Totemwell; and it is only lately, and by the merest accident, that she discovered she had an uncle in this city. We have come to New York, on purpose to see you; and though you have been so long unknown to each other, I trust you will be as glad to see her, as I know she will to see you. We thought I had better come first, and tell you the whole story, and then she could come here, or you might go there, if you chose."

All the while, Mr. Daventry sat with his right arm on the back of his chair, gently caressing his luxuriant black whiskers with his jeweled fingers, and looking curiously at the doctor, with something between a smile and a frown.

"Well, sir, you don't seem particularly grateful for this information; I must say, I did expect a little more show of natural affection towards the only child of your own brother, when"—

"Upon my word, Dr. Edgerly, you are a very strange sort of person. You come into a man's house, who never heard of you in his life, with a long story about a lot of his own relations, who died and were buried some twenty years ago; and because he doesn't choose to believe all these marvels, simply on your say-so, you fly into a passion, and begin to accuse him of wanting natural affection, and all that sort of stuff. If it were the first of April, I should know what to think of it; but as it is in the sober, sensible month of July, it looks a good deal more as if you had just escaped from a mad house."

"Mr. Daventry," cried the doctor, and the girandoles shook on the table beside him, "I never was less in a passion in my life; and as to its being April or July, I never gave that a moment's thought. I confess I thought one month as good as another. As to the truth of my story, I don't ask you to believe it on my say-so, or any one else; all I ask is, that you should hear all the facts as they really occurred, and that you should see the young lady, who is the perfect image of her mother; and then, unless"—

"Oh, well, if that is all you came to New York for, you have lost your labor. I tell you, your whole story is the most barefaced, swindling transaction I ever heard of. I shall let the matter drop for this once; but if I ever hear any thing of you again, I shall certainly cause you to be arrested, for attempting to obtain money under false pretences."

"Mr. Daventry, she wants not a dollar of your money; but I begin to see through your villany. I dare say you would be glad to let the matter drop; but it will not, I can assure you. I see now, you have all along been a party to this outrage; and that letter you are so anxious to conceal, shows both your crime and your accomplice. I have long known Deacon Redwood, sir, and now I know you; and we shall see whether you are to be permitted to defraud a helpless orphan of her rightful inheritance. You will hear from me again, Mr. Daventry; and after a very different fashion."

"I am very glad to hear it, sir, for your manner now is not exactly what I could wish. If you really know Mr. Redwood, as well as you pretend, I wonder you have not profited more by his example. He is the greatest economist of power I know of, and never, I suspect, wastes either his breath or strength in unmeaning threats. I wish you, Mr. Edgerly, a very good morning: here Mungo, show this gentleman out—and if he ever comes here again, remember I'm not at home. I was willing to see him once, in spite of the deacon's warning; but a second visit from such an old noddlehead, would be altogether too tiresome; and besides, I might be tempted to throw him out of the window, which would be excessively disagreeable."

"The miserable, cowardly rascal!" muttered Dr. Edgerly, as he swept fiercely down Broadway; "I wish I had him

so; I'd manage to squeeze some feeling into him. I don't know when I've been so stirred up—not acknowledge her! but I'll make him acknowledge her—I'll make him refund every cent of her money, the paltry, mean-spirited villain!"

The doctor's mind worked fast; and by the time he arrived at home, the suit was brought, the witnesses summoned, the trial over, and a verdict returned in favor of Mary, in the sum of fifty thousand dollars; all owing to a single speech, in which he roused the passions of the jury, by enlarging on Mary's youth and beauty, and the unparaleled baseness of her perfidious and cruel uncle. What a world this would be, if every one had powers equal to his will!

While Dr. Edgerly was thus employed, Mary took her work into the parlor, as being the coolest part of the house, to amuse herself as well as she could till his return. She had been there only a short time, when Mr. Mason came in to look for a book; but seeing Mary seated there alone, it was no more than polite to speak to her; and having spoken, it would have been a great deal less than polite for her not to answer; and so—and so—he forgot all about his book and every thing else, except the subject of their conversation, and after that, there was nothing left, but to sit down and talk it out.

"I wish you would tell me more about Philip Hastings," said Mary.

"Why, what makes you so interested in Philip Hastings, all at once? I shall begin to be jealous of him, if you don't take care."

"How can I help being interested in him, after living with him so long, and after what you said about his being so unhappy, and tormented with a longing after unattainable excellence, that kept him from doing as well as he could, because it wasn't the best?"

"Ah, well! if it is enough to make a young man interesting, because he is unhappy, and because his ambition is greater than his powers, I can show you a thousand interesting young men, every time we walk down Broadway."

"Perhaps I don't explain myself very clearly; but I know he used to be very interesting to me, when we were children; and very affectionate."

"Well, so he is, in his way, as anybody I have ever met, and knows as well what belongs to friendship; but after all"—

"What do you mean by his way?"

"Why, I mean that he will love you, not in your way, but his own; not as you would wish to be loved, but as it pleases him. He is ready enough to give his whole heart to his friend; but the gift is burdened with so many arbitrary conditions, that it is hardly worth the having. Now, I would rather have one love me a thimbleful, *my* way, than an ocean of his own; but you can never do any thing with Hastings; he is as obstinate and selfish in his love, as in everything else."

"But suppose he should find someone whose way of love was the same as his?"

"Ah, if he only could! they would be the happiest couple since Adam; but it's no use, there never was, and never can be."

"Perhaps not at first; but she might grow to it, and then think it the best. But why can't you tell me more, exactly what you mean? In what particular is he so fantastic?"

"Fantastic; that's just the word; but I will tell you, and then say whether, if it were your case, you could grow to him and love him. In the first place, what you said of his boyhood is still more applicable now. He will keep you in a constant whirlwind of passion; in the fever of love to-day, in an ague of indifference, or even harshness to-morrow, so that you will burn and freeze by turns, like Milton's spirits of the damned. Then he will be forever trying experiments with your love, to bring out its utmost strength; he will make himself cold and distant, for the sake of your fond wooing; he will be often tormented by an evil spirit, that you may drive it away; and if you fail to see his condition, or seeing, fail to relieve, his assumed jealousy will kindle into real; and if he doesn't make you as wretched as himself, it is because your soul is too pure and simple to comprehend the nature, or even suspect the existence, of such passions. Ask of him a favor, and you get no answer; but the next day, or the next hour, you will receive it a hundred-fold. In short, the whole object of his life will seem to be to vex and torment you in every way; but he will do

it all out of pure love. Now, say, could you possibly love such a being?"

"If he loved me!"

"He does love you; he is ready to die for you. I know it, for I have heard him say so a thousand times. I know it"—

But at this moment Dr. Edgerly entered. Mr. Mason abruptly rose, and walked once or twice across the room. Then he went out without another word; Mary heard the street door close behind him, and that was the last. He had gone as suddenly as he came; and without any of the family learning any more of his history, than is already known to the reader.

"He was a very quiet young man, and paid as he went; and I am sorry to lose him," said Mrs. Harris.

"He was dreadfully stuck up," sneered Miss June (with pride, she meant, not gingerbread or molasses), "and after all, it's my private opinion, he was some low person, and no more a sculptor than I am. I tried one day to enter into a conversation on art, because I thought it would please him, you know; and asked him if he didn't think there was too much foreshortening in Powers's statue of the Greek Slave."

"Foreshortening; what's that?" said Mrs. Binks.

"It's, oh it's"—

"Lard?" suggested Mrs. Binks.

"Lard! I really don't understand you, Mrs. Binks."

"Why, I didn't know but it might be something like what we put in pie-crust, to make it light and flecky, you know."

"Don't say we, I beg of you, Mrs. Binks; for I assure you, I don't know; and I wonder you should introduce such a subject, when I'm talking of the Greek Slave; but as I was saying, I asked Mr. Mason that question; and he said, yes, he thought there was rather too much foreshortening, about her dress, especially; did you ever hear any thing so vulgar in your life? I was a good mind to come right away, but I gave him such a look, he didn't say another word."

So they good-naturedly passed him round, and if he could have listened to the conversation at Mrs. Harris's any time all the next week, he must have been highly gratified to find himself of such importance.

"What *can* have made him go away so suddenly?"

thought Mary; "I wonder if I have said any thing to offend him. But no, that can't be it; it's very plain he cared nothing for me. He only talked with me to amuse himself and pass away the time; but he might at least have stopped to say good-by. I couldn't have gone away and left him so, though I don't love him in the least, and never could. He is very pleasant and agreeable, but he is not the man I could love; no, not the man that I could love. I don't believe I could love him if I should try, and he knew it well enough; but that's no reason he shouldn't stop and say good-by. He's too tall for my fancy; no, not too tall, he's too slender. I'm not sure, but I think his forehead is too low, or else it's too broad; at any rate, I'm glad I let him see so plainly that I didn't love him, for I should be sorry to think I had made him unhappy."

On entering the parlor, and finding Mary and Mr. Mason in such close communion, Dr. Edgerly frowned, as if not exactly pleased; but on Mr. Mason's departure his thoughts returned to their former channel; and, as he took his seat by her side, Mary saw at once that he had something of unusual interest to communicate.

"Well, what news? have you seen my uncle?"

"Don't call him uncle; he isn't your uncle; he isn't uncle to anybody, unless the evil one is his nephew. Do you think he utterly disowns you, refuses to acknowledge you as his brother's child, declared you were buried twenty years ago? But I can see through it all, he is afraid you have come to claim your father's property; and in some way he is connected with Deacon Redwood, I don't know how exactly, for no good I'll warrant; but they'll find themselves sadly disappointed. I mean to see a lawyer this very day, and set him to investigate the case, and then, if your father really left any property, and I've no doubt he did, a very handsome one, we'll see what there is to hinder you from having it."

"Oh no, I can't bear to think of doing any thing like that; they couldn't give me an uncle, and I don't want the money whether it is his or mine. But don't you think if I should go to him myself and tell him so, and that all I wanted was that he should love me, that he would do it!"

"No, I don't; for in the first place I don't believe he ever loved any thing or anybody except himself. He's a mere

selfish sensualist, without half as much heart as a dog, though for that matter few men have; but he is, I think, the most thoroughly heartless being I ever met with. Why, Peter Redwood is an angel of light to him; he's selfish and vulgar enough I know, but then he has some apology for a heart; I can imagine such a thing as his really falling in love, though he has no very fine sensibilities; but this man is glazed all over. He's one of your mockers, and most likely an infidel. Ugh! if there's any thing I utterly loathe and abominate, it's one of these used-up, *blasé* men of fashion, without principle and without honor, who are proud to despise what they once revered, and who have just spirit enough left to laugh at goodness; if I could have got this fellow into a passion, I should have thought better of him; but he hasn't heart enough even for that."

"You forget that he is still my uncle; it pains me to hear you talk so of him, even if he deserves it, and perhaps after all he has never found anyone to love him."

"Or what is worse, has never found anyone to love; but if you are fully determined to take no steps towards the recovery of your property, we may as well return to Totemwell at once."

"Dear old Totemwell, how glad I shall be to see you! I'm sure I shall never wish to leave it again. I will try to forget that I have ever had an uncle, or that there is any other world than our own."

"But why do you sigh?"

"Did I sigh? I'm sure I didn't know it; I have no reason to sigh that I know of. I have every thing in this world to make me happy, yes, every thing."

"There is no need of looking so grave about it, is there? but perhaps you don't mean that you are happy, only that you ought to be?"

"No, I mean that I *am* happy; I never was happier in my life; with so many kind friends, it would be strange if I were not. To be sure I lost my father just as I thought I had found him, and now I have lost my uncle; but there are you, and your wife, and Aunt Bethany, and ever so many more. Oh yes, I am very happy and"—

"Why, why, what is all this? these are no tears of joy, my dear little Mary; tell me, what is the matter? Can it be you are wasting these precious drops on an uncle you have

never seen and who has proved himself so unworthy? I declare I never felt so little charity for him as at this moment."

"It's not that; I was not thinking of him at all."

"What then is it? won't you tell your poor old uncle William that you've forgotten so long?"

"I don't know myself, I can't think what made me feel so strangely just now when I'd been feeling so happy; but never mind, I shall feel better by-and-by; but do you know, I've a complaint to make against you?"

"No dear, what is it?"

"Why, you've been so terribly grave and uninteresting of late, you have hardly given us a pleasant word; you don't seem like yourself."

"True, I have been rather grave and unsocial, though I didn't suppose anyone had noticed it; but when I tell you the reason you will no longer wonder."

Dr. Edgerly now proceeded to give a full account of his visit to Douglas, and when he had finished, Mary exclaimed, "Well, I don't wonder, to be sure, that you have seemed graver than usual; such a story is enough to sober anyone; but is there nothing that can be done for them? it seems so dreadful to perish in this way in the midst of a great city like New York."

"Suppose you go with me and see what you can do? I confess I have no hopes; yet there is no reckoning a woman's influence."

"Oh yes, yes, I will go gladly, now, this minute."

On arriving at the home of the unfortunate Douglas, the doctor stopped a moment on the sidewalk, as doubting how Mary would be affected by such revolting scenes as she would be called to witness, and to which she had hitherto been an entire stranger. She put an end to his hesitation, however, by asking why he waited; and, cautioning her to be careful, he led the way down into the loathsome dungeon we have already described, and which, instead of being rendered less repulsive by so glorious a vision, seemed only to become yet more foul and unsightly, as if the light of her beauty had brought out new features of ugliness and terror.

The body of the little child still lay where it had been before, but the change the coffin should have hidden was

now going on under the open eye of day. What else the doctor saw he never told to any living thing; but as he turned, and almost pushed Mary up the steps, she caught a glimpse over his shoulder of a hook in the ceiling, and a cord, and something that hung still without swinging, with its eyes on a dark red puddle at its feet.

The sun was shining in Laurens street, he shone brighter still in Broadway, and well he might; for if he should stint one of his blessed beams for every deed of blood he sees as he travels from east to west in his daily round, who would dare to calculate the period of his total eclipse?

On their return from their visit of mercy, unhappily so vain, Mary was going up stairs to her own room, when Nancy opened her door a little way, and asked her to come in a moment, for she wanted to see her. Wondering much at the tone of this request, Mary pushed open the door and entered, but her surprise was still greater when she found Nancy seated in a low chair at the foot of the bed, and discovered from her countenance that she had been weeping. Hastily laying down her bonnet and scarf, she ran to her side, and throwing her arms around her in a most affectionate manner, begged her to tell the cause of her distress. To this Nancy made no other answer than a fresh burst of tears, weeping and sobbing so violently that Mary became seriously alarmed, and proposed to call her mother.

"Oh no, no; I wouldn't have her see me for the world. I shall feel better in a moment, and then I will tell you all; but you must promise never to repeat a word of what I am going to say to you, to any human being; and you must forget it yourself as soon as possible."

"Then why do you tell me at all?"

"I *must* tell somebody; I shall die if I don't, and there's noone else who would sympathize with me in the least. Oh, I can't tell you how much I have suffered the last few days, for all I have seemed so careless and lighthearted; but I'm almost afraid to tell you what I have done. I have been so foolish and wicked, no, not wicked either exactly, but I'm afraid you will think so badly of me. You know Mr. Dickey; he has boarded here nearly five years; when he first came I was a mere child, as wild and giddy as I am now, and we used to be together a good deal, and I had a

kind of childish liking for him, even then. He used to make me little presents every once in a while, not of any great value; but he did it in such a way, that I couldn't help seeing that he liked me. And so it has gone on ever since, till everybody considered us engaged, and in fact, so we did ourselves, though nothing had ever been said on the subject. But my mother has never liked the match, I don't know why, I'm sure, and she has done all she could, in a quiet way, to prevent it. I hope God will forgive me for speaking so of my own mother, but I don't think she has done exactly right about it, though I know it was all out of love for me. She has misrepresented things that we have said and done, and manœuvered in such a way, that we have hardly had a comfortable day for two or three months, and I have sometimes doubted whether I really loved him at all. She is continually asking me why, if Mr. Dickey really loves me, he hasn't offered himself long before; and she accuses me of wanting proper spirit, because I don't show him, at once, that I'm no longer to be trifled with. Well, when Mr. Redwood came, mother had heard wonderful stories about his being so rich, and she began at once to talk about him, and say how handsome he was, and how good-natured, and all that, and I dare say it may all be true, though I hadn't the heart to see the half of it; but finally, what with her incessant urging, her hints and inuendoes that gave me more trouble than all her arguments, but most of all, the coldness and indifference I thought I discovered on the part of Mr. Dickey—I didn't know what I *was* doing—but I thought I would see if I couldn't excite his jealousy a little, so as to see if he really loved me, and I began to flirt with Mr. Redwood,—something that I had never done before in my life.

"But Mr. Dickey took not the least notice, and left off speaking to me altogether, till I became so miserable I didn't know what to do; and so, I went and engaged myself to Mr. Redwood, just out of spite and ugliness you know, for I never loved him nor anyone else, except Mr. Dickey, and now he probably thinks I am the most heartless creature that ever lived. If he only knew how wretched I am; but if I'm ever so miserable, the moment I come where he is, I seem as merry and unconcerned as ever, and I couldn't look

any other way to save my life. There, I have told you all; and you can go away and hate me, if you choose; I know"—

"You are engaged to Mr. Redwood?"

"Yes."

"Engaged to be married to Mr. Peter Redwood,—the one who is here in this house?"

"Yes, I don't know any other, and I wish I had never known him."

"But are you sure? isn't there some mistake? Tell me exactly every word he said."

"I don't remember every word, nor half he said, my mind was in such a whirl at the time, but it's impossible I should be mistaken. We talked about it at least an hour, and he cautioned me to say nothing about our engagement at present, for he didn't know how it would please his father, and—but I'm afraid to tell what else he said, for"—

"Go on, every word, every syllable; you know you promised to tell me all."

"But I'm afraid you won't like it."

"Perhaps not, but that is no concern of yours; I mean, dear, that it won't be your fault; what was it?"

"Well, he said his father wished him to marry you, but he'd no thoughts of it; he liked me a great deal the best; I knew all the time, he only said that to flatter me, but men think we are weak enough to believe any thing, and so we are; at any rate, though I didn't quite believe him, I liked to hear him say so."

"And do you mean to marry him?"

"What else can I do? how can I help it, after what has passed between us? I'm sure I would rather die ten thousand times; but I can't break my promise even to him."

"I will tell you one thing that you are probably unaware of, and then you can decide how far you are bound by a promise made to such a man as Mr. Redwood. I almost blush to own it, though it was none of my doing, but at the time he made this solemn engagement to you, he was as solemnly engaged to me, and had been nearly a year. It is true, that I never gave him much encouragement, and no one could have blamed him for wishing to break the engagement; but to go and engage himself to another in the same house,—I didn't really believe he was capable of such mean-

ness. However, I am so glad to think I shall have nothing more to do with him, that I could almost forgive him a much greater insult. But what do you think now of marrying him?"

"Marry him! I'd as soon marry a toad, or a viper; the wretch! the odious, contemptible villain! I might have known he wasn't to be trusted, when he told me so often to keep it a secret. I'm glad I didn't. Oh, it's so fortunate I told you! there's no knowing what he wouldn't have done; but you didn't love him, I know you couldn't have loved him; he wasn't a thousandth part good enough for you. But how came you to be engaged to him, do tell me that?"

"Some other time perhaps; but I must go now and see my aunt, she will wonder what has become of me."

"But what am I to do about Mr. Dickey? I don't see but I'm as badly off as ever. He never will do any thing towards making up, I know him too well for that; he's too proud altogether."

"You could hardly expect it of him either, after what has happened; but I suspect his pride is not the greatest obstacle; from what I have seen of you both, I should say you were much the prouder of the two."

"Do you really think so; I never knew I was proud before—my mother is always finding fault with me for having so little; but what can I do? you wouldn't have me go to him, and tell him how sorry I am all this has happened, and promise never to do so again!"

"No, indeed; but you can tell him all that without speaking a word, and without any sacrifice of modesty; but I can't stop any longer now."

"One moment, I want to ask you one thing; have you ever been in love yourself?"

"Well, I will tell you honestly—I know so little what love is, that I don't know myself whether I have ever been what you call in love, or not. But I have very queer feelings sometimes."

"Right here?"

"Yes, right here."

"Pleasant, are they?"

"Yes, sometimes very pleasant."

"And then a little painful perhaps?"

"Yes, I think more than a little, but most of the time, I

don't know how I feel, whether it's most like laughing or crying."

"Ah yes, I see you've got through your abs, and are spelling words of two syllables. Can you tell me what this spells, M a s o n?"

"There, I can't wait another minute."

Aunt Bethany was almost as indignant, in her way, on hearing Dr. Edgerly's story, as he himself had been; but her indignation was not a little allayed, by the reflection, that now Mary would belong exclusively to herself. After she had partially exhausted her condolements and reproaches, "Well," cried Mary, "now I have something to tell you, that is a great deal more than that, and a great deal better too, if you are ready to hear it."

"Well, child, what is it? though for that matter, I don't see as any thing could be much worse, nor, as you say, much better; for certainly it's a comfort to know that you're not going to live with that ugly old uncle."

Mary then told her story, only omitting all mention of Mr. Dickey.

"Well," cried Aunt Bethany, drawing a breath as long as a piece of piping-cord; "if that don't beat the Dutch! New York is certainly the wickedest place I ever was in, and the sooner we get out of it the better. I'm afraid, every day, I shall go and do some dreadful thing or other, and Dr. Edgerly, you know, he's been to the theater, and now here's this about Peter Redwood; I wonder what his father 'll say, after all the pains he's taken with his bringing up, and he so anxious to have him marry you. But what are you going to do about it?"

"I shall write to him, that I wish all intercourse between us to cease, and if he wishes to know the reason, he can inquire of Miss Nancy Harris."

"But, wouldn't that be rather too short and crusty like? hadn't you better try to smooth over matters a little? I should hate to have a downright quarrel with the deacon."

"I have no desire to quarrel with anyone, and that is the very reason I wish to be plain and decided in the first place."

"But still, you might say you was sorry, you know, or something."

Mary made no answer, but sat down to write her note. She sealed and directed it with unusual care, and then gave it to a servant, with instructions to deliver it to Mr. Redwood, as soon as he came in.

"Well, dear, what did you write?" said Aunt Bethany.

"I wrote, 'Mr. Redwood, Sir: It is my wish, as I suppose it is your own, that all intercourse between us should cease after this date. If you wish to learn more, I would refer you to Miss Nancy Harris.' Short and sweet, is it not aunty?"

"It's very good, I'm sure, as good as it could be; but I wonder what he'll say, when he comes to read it."

It was about an hour after, when Peter received this laconic epistle. He read it three times before he fully comprehended its meaning; but when it at length kindled upon him, it stirred up a variety of emotions. Fear of Mary's loss, and his father's indignation came first arm in arm, then anger against Nancy panted after, and lagging along far in the rear, sense of shame at the detection of his duplicity.

"The pesky little fool, to go and blab, after I told her not! but I vum, I won't marry her; she may sue me for breach of promise first. The fact is they're all a confounded cheat, these women, from beginning to end; you can't put any dependence on 'em, and the more a man has, the worse off he is. It's hard enough to manage one, but two play the very mischief."

"You really think so, do you?" cried Nancy, dancing into the room, "well, I shall be very happy to free you from any farther anxiety on my account. Miss Grant may, perhaps still keep her claim upon you, but I hereby renounce all right and title to the thing you call a heart. But, oh fy! Mr. Redwood, how could you be so avaricious? I'm sure we ought to be vastly obliged to you for thinking so highly of us. There can't be too much of a good thing, I suppose, is your motto; but, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush you know;" and away skipped the little lady, leaving Peter, as the romancers say, in a state that can be better imagined than described.

His first impulse was to get out of the house and city as soon as possible; but, then, he thought again of his father's anger, and determined to hold his ground, hoping

in some way to propitiate his offended mistress, or, at all events, still to keep the secret of his folly. He waited till Nancy was out of hearing, and then, stealing up stairs, he knocked very softly at Aunt Bethany's door. Mary opened the door, but, on seeing who it was, she instantly closed it again, and Peter heard the bolts rattle as she turned the key. He made an attempt to stop her, but she was too quick for him, and he now fell to entreaty, begging her in the most abject terms to admit him only for a moment, declaring that he could make all right, that it was all Nancy's fault, and much more to the same effect; till, at last, he heard some one coming, and was compelled to make a precipitate retreat.

Our travelers had now nothing further to keep them in New York, but as it was so late in the week they determined to defer their departure till the following Monday. In the mean time Mary had the satisfaction of seeing the most perfect harmony restored between Nancy and Mr. Dickey, and before she went away, Nancy assured her in a tone of the most heartfelt happiness that there was no longer any danger of a rupture between them, for every thing was settled, and they were to be married in September.

"And I owe it all to you, for if it hadn't been for what you said, I should never have mustered courage to make the first advances, and he says he shouldn't, for he had come to the conclusion that I didn't care for him, and never had; and if I hadn't given him a little look, as shy as a mouse in a cheese, and no bigger than *that*, he'd made up his mind to go out West. And we both want you to come to our wedding, and you must come and make me a nice long visit as soon as we get settled in a house of our own; and here's something to remember me by, but don't open it till you get home."

At last it was time to go. Peter still accompanied them, and even made occasional attempts to recover his former standing, but noone gave him any encouragement, and he finally subsided into an expression of injured innocence, throwing in a sigh now and then, as he felt his face begin to brighten, as one would throw in a stick to keep the pot boiling.

Aunt Bethany no sooner found herself comfortably

seated on the after deck, with the sloping rays of the setting sun dancing up and down her petticoats, than she straightway took out her knitting, and entered into a familiar and highly edifying discourse with a matronly looking woman on her right hand, and a hard-faced lady on the left. Dr. Edgerly was already weary of the scene around him, and as soon as he saw them draw their chairs and heads together, a sure sign that they had done with trifles, he, also, drew near the charmed circle. Just at this moment, the hard-faced lady —but here I feel bound to stop and tell in what her hardness consisted. A high forehead, suspicious of the razor, faded blue eyes, like old crockery, a hospitable mouth, guarded by a prominent Roman nose, like a tower, and a set of butter-teeth, vulgarly so called, composed altogether a face as hard as the nether millstone, or any sum in Colburn's Arithmetic. But just at this moment, I say, the hard-faced lady, who had already informed Aunt Bethany that her name was Blodgett, that she lived in Lynn, and had just been on to New York to buy a new stock of goods, was preparing to make a still deeper dive into her personal history, having been incited thereto by the other lady, Mrs. David Dander, inquiring if she were married.

Miss Blodgett shook her head softly, but in a way to imply that she might have been, seven times, if she had wanted to. "You see," she said, "I could never find anyone that exactly suited me; I suppose I'm too fastidious; and then I've no need to marry; I'm doing a nice snug business that I can manage in my own way. And after I get my money, I can do what I choose with it, you know; and if I want to give fifty or a hundred dollars, or some such trifle to the minister, there's nobody to make any fuss about it."

"If you want to," said Dr. Edgerly.

"I have five brothers and sisters, none of 'em married, all living in the same house, and church-members, and in fact I don't see how the minister could be supported without us, for we pay almost half his salary. My father was a pillar in the church, and his sons, I trust, are all following in his footsteps."

"Bless me," said the doctor, "that must be with a hop,

skip and a jump; but it's a mercy the church don't tumble to pieces,"

"Did you say any thing, sir?" cried Miss Blodgett, "did you speak to me?"

"Ahem,—did you say your father was a pillar in the church, or a pillow? I didn't fully understand."

"I said a pillar," replied Miss Blodgett, with an air of mild reproach; "I shouldn't think of calling any one a pillow."

"I've known such men—real feather-beds, you might call 'em, men of such soft, comfortable doctrine that are just the thing, you know, to sleep on."

"My father never slept in church, sir, nor let others," said Miss Blodget, and looked at the doctor in hopes of a reply; but he only stared fervently at the flagstaff, and after several ineffectual attempts to attract his attention, she was compelled to turn again to her female companions.

"It must be a great comfort to you," said Aunt Bethany.

"Oh, it is, I assure you; young men are so apt to be wild and dissipated now-a-days."

"Do you keep a servant?" said Mrs. Dander.

"No; one of my sisters takes care o' the house, and she thinks it less troublesome than to look after a servant; and besides, you know, servants are dreadfully expensive."

"Oh, dreadful!" said Aunt Bethany; and then she and Mrs. Dander shook their heads negatively, not in token of dissent, but as old ladies generally shake their heads when they hear of any thing particularly monstrous or incredible.

"They eat so much, you know!" said Miss Blodgett.

"I know they're apt to," said Mrs. Dander; "but I'll tell you how I manage that: I always take care to have plenty of pork and beans to give 'em; for beans, you know, is fillin'."

"So they is," said Aunt Bethany, "mazin' fillin', but then they don't always feel beany."

"Never mind, if you don't give 'em any thing else they'll feel beany fast enough; and if one has as large a family as I have, they can't get along without a servant just to do the washin' and cleanin'."

"How many children have you?" said Miss Blodgett.

"Nine," replied Mrs. Dander, looking down upon poor Miss Blodgett, as if from the ninth heaven, if there are so many, "and sad rogues they are too. There's one on 'em now leanin' over the rail; here, Tommy, Tommy, min' what you're about, you'll be tumblin' overboard nex' thing; you can't think what a trial that boy's been to me, an' from the very first; he—but is he a married man, do you know?"

"Oh yes, and a doctor besides," said Aunt Bethany.

"Then, why didn't he say so?" asked Miss Blodgett.

"Oh, well, then I don't mind, it was when I was livin' in Houston street—you know where that is, I suppose?"

Oh, yes, Miss Blodgett knew very well, and rather triumphed over Aunt Bethany who didn't, and it was wonderful how this sense of superiority allayed the indignation she had conceived against Dr. Edgerly, and Aunt Bethany as his accomplice.

"Well, right opposite the house where I lived there was another, an' the street was so narrow we could see everything 't went on there just as easy as not. I didn't know the lady very well, but somehow 'r other I'd got an idea that she meant to set up an opposition to my Tommy, you know. An' sure enough putty soon nurse comes runnin' to me, and tells me all about it, how she'd seen it all with her own eyes, an' how she know'd the other nurse, an' couldn't abide her. 'An' now,' says she, 'I'll tell you what,' says she, 'we must have the first baby,' An' so we will,' says she, or my name isn't Polly Creedle."

"'That we will,' says I, 'for my name isn't Dander for nothing either. I'll put a spider in her dumplin,' an' so I dare say we should if it had been anybody else but just Tom. But, first thing I knew, nurse comes to me again, as red as fire, an' says, 'Tain't no use, t'other baby's born, so we may's well give up.' An' sure enough, 'twan't mor'n an hour fore she see the ugly little toad a sprawlin' in the nurse's arms. An' then she used to come and dandle it out the window for us to see, you know, la! in the most provokin' way, till 'tlast nurse got so mad she shut to the blines, an' only peeped out wunst in a while to see what was goin' on."

"'Oh, never mind,' says I, 'we'll show 'em, one o' these days;' an' the day came at last, sure enough, an nurse, she run an, opened the blines, an' looked out as grand as could

be, but all 'twunst she giv' a little scream, an' sot right down in the middle o' the floor."

"'What's the matter now,' says I, 'for I thought mebbe she'd ruptered a blood-vessel, or somethin.'

"'Oh,' says she, 'they've moved away, they've moved away.'"

"'What!' says I, 'you don't mean,' says I, 'they've gone an moved away the very day.' 'They have,' says she; 'the cart's going away now, and there isn't a soul left in the house.' 'Then,' says I, 'they're an odious good-for-nothing set as ever lived; they've done it just out of ugliness, and nothing else.' 'Of course they did,' says she, 'what else could it be?' so I set to, and had a real, good, hearty fit crying, and that's just the way that boy's gone on ever since; and if he don't break my heart 'fore he's done, I *shall* be glad."

On arriving in W., our travelers proceeded directly to the house of Mr. Cadger, who received them, if that were possible, with even more than his former kindness, and pressed them so hard to remain, that they had much ado to get away the next morning. When Dr. Edgerly came to pay the bill, Mr. Cadger put his hands behind his back, and replied, with a meaning laugh, "No, I've done with that."

"How," said the doctor, "have you forgotten our bond? we were to pay, the next time we stopped"—

"At my tavern; but I don't keep tavern any longer."

"Why, what do you mean by that?"

"Pulled down the old signpost last week, and chopped it up for firewood; so you see I'm a private man, and can entertain my friends when I please."

"Well, that's one way; you have certainly stolen a march upon us this time; but we shall never forgive you, till you come over to Totemwell and make us a long visit. But here's a budget of some sort, Mary charged me to give to you, for Mrs. Cadger—New York whim-whams, I suppose;" and before Mr. Cadger could express his thanks, the doctor was gone.

It was late in the afternoon, when they arrived in Totemwell. "Is everybody dead, I wonder?" cried Mary, as she looked down the long, broad street, "I believe the very shadows are asleep; but there's your wife and Maggy beckoning to you; why don't you run?"

And the doctor did run, without stopping even to pick up his valise; and Mary watched them, all three, as they turned and went into the house, his wife hanging on one arm and Maggy on the other.

Old Bachelor.—"What a horrid old fogy he must have been, to behave in that style, after being married seven years; and as for that Mr. Cadger, I can hardly think of him without laughing. 'Pon honor, it's too ridiculous."

Young Wife.—"No more an old fogy than yourself, sir, and not half so ridiculous. I wonder what right you old bachelors have to talk about such things."

"Oh, I forgot; you've been married so long, of course, you know the whole story. Let me see; is it the ninth day or the tenth? and your eyes not open yet!"

"Neither the ninth nor the tenth, sir, but the fourteenth, I"—

"What! a whole fortnight! pro-di-gious! and how much longger do you suppose it'll last?"

"What will last?"

"This fit of foolish fondness, that you've fallen into."

"If you mean how long I shall love my husband, I hope I always shall, as long as I live."

"Hope?"

"Know, then."

"And how long do you suppose he will love you?"

"As long as I love him, of course. We shall always love each other, shan't we dear, just exactly as well as we do now? and as for you, sir, you'll never know what it is to be happy, till you go and get married yourself."

"I'd rather take your husband's word for that."

"Well, sir, you may, and he'll say the same thing. He told me last night, that he'd never been so happy in his life."

"I must say, he doesn't look particularly happy now."

"He does too, he always looks happy when he's with me; don't you love?"

"You ought to know best about that, my dear."

"Well, you do look happy; and you are happy, you know you are, and you said so last night, you know you did; now didn't you?"

"If I did, my dear, I think it must have been the trout. You know I'm so fond of trout; and I came all the way from New York on purpose."

"Ha, ha! that's a fondness; now, I dare say, will last a lifetime. Pity you were not a trout!"

"Well, I don't care; you don't love me one bit, and you never did, and I won't love you either; so there now! You're both of you as ugly as you can be."

"Come dear, I'm going to ride, won't you go with me?"

"No, I won't; I don't mean ever to ride with you again."

"Then I shall be very wretched."

"Why, you don't love me."

"Who told you that I didn't love you?"

"You told me so yourself, just now."

"Did I? Then may Heaven forgive me for the biggest lie I ever told, since I was whipped at school, for saying I saw the schoolmaster's daughter eat up my Latin dictionary."

"Then you do love me?"

"Better than my own soul."

"And you always will love me?"

"As long as I have an eye to see, and a heart to feel."

"And Henry don't know any thing about it?"

"Not the first rudiments."

"Are the horses at the door?"

"Yes, all booted and spurred."

"Then are you all saddled and bridled. Well, well, I'll take care how I ever get the bit in *my* mouth."

CHAPTER XXV.

HOME AGAIN. A PLEASANT PARTY PLEASANTLY PERPLEXED.

Two weeks had now passed, since the close of the last chapter; but Mary had not yet regained her former interest in her old pursuits. On the contrary, they seemed every day to become more irksome to her, and she wondered how she could ever have found delight in them. She had always been very fond of society, but now she shrank from it as much as possible; and if her life was not one of entire solitude, it was because her friends, who were determined not to give her up, did all they could to overcome her reluctance. Conscious of the change that had taken place in her feelings, and unable to account for it, she spent hours every day in wishing that she had never left her quiet home, and in meditating vain regrets for that humble peace and content which she feared would never return.

"I was happy," thought she, "before I went to New York, or should have been, if it hadn't been for my engagement; but now I am freed from that, I am more unhappy than ever. I can't imagine what is the reason; I have every thing that I had then; I have had a most delightful journey; everybody is as glad to see me home again, as they could be, and yet I am not happy! I used to be so cheerful! I was always singing; and had as much as I could do, to keep from laughing outright, at the funny things that came into my head; but now, I believe, I haven't sung for more than a week, and my heart is as heavy as lead. I wonder if it's because I'm growing old! That can hardly be in a week. Oh, dear! if I thought it would always be so, I should long to die."

Aunt Bethany was the one to suffer most from this change in her favorite. Mary and she had been hitherto almost inseparable; and it was a great trial to the old lady's

social qualities, to be obliged, as she often was, to spend the greater part of the day by herself. She began at last to betake herself for consolation to Mrs. Edgerly; and then they would talk hour after hour, on a subject on which they were both so warmly interested, but without ever coming any nearer to the truth.

At length, one day, as they were discussing the question in the presence of the doctor, he suddenly broke in upon them, by exclaiming: "Why, it's plain enough what's the matter with her! don't you see, the poor thing has just found out that she has a heart? For all she's gone through with, she's been all the time as simple as a child; but this visit to New York has opened her eyes, as I thought it would, like enough; and what you see is only the natural effects of such a discovery. It comes harder to her, as it always does, when it's put off so long, just like measles or whooping-cough; but she'll live through it."

"Well, I declare!" cried Aunt Bethany, "if I don't believe you're right! I mean to run right over and tell her so; for I know it'ill be a comfort to her, to find out just what ails her."

The old lady accordingly lost no time in communicating to Mary these gracious tidings; but though it is generally asserted, that knowing the disease is half the cure, very little improvement seemed to follow in the present instance. In the mean time, it had been commonly reported through the village that Mary's engagement was now finally broken; but as Peter had carefully concealed the whole affair from his father, and had even called on Mary once or twice, still more effectually to deceive him, the deacon naturally supposed that all things remained in their former condition. He had several times proposed to accompany his son to Mrs. Grant's, in order to bring matters to a final issue; but Peter, becoming yet more and more afraid of that terrible secret the older it grew, and feeling quite sure that it would be let loose upon him, the first time his father and Mary were brought together, had always found some excuse for deferring the visit; till at last the deacon would be put off no longer.

One evening, nearly three weeks after their return home, Mary having been for once persuaded to forego her accus-

tomed solitude, was sitting with Aunt Bethany in the little parlor; when, to their great surprise, Deacon Redwood, followed by Peter, very unceremoniously entered, and without waiting for an invitation, took his seat in such a way, as showed plainly that he had come on business, and meant to lose no time in the preliminaries. He took out his yellow, black spotted, silk handkerchief, and, having stretched it across his knees, prepared to launch himself at once into his subject, when the door again opened, and Dr. Edgerly came in, accompanied by no less a person than Colonel Totling. Now, as the valiant colonel had never been in the house, to Mary's recollection, but once before, and that was at the funeral of Aunt Rebecca, she was naturally not a little surprised, and instantly fell to work to conjecture what could possibly be the motive of his visit. She found herself, however, completely at fault; and, lest the reader should be no more successful, I will kindly let him into the secret.

Colonel Totling was at this time nearly fifty years of age; and when we consider this circumstance, and also the sore disappointment he had once met with, we might naturally infer that his marrying days were over. Indeed, he had himself come to that conclusion full ten years before, when he finally resigned all hopes of Miss Lavinia; but having kept up, ever since, a visiting acquaintance with most of the ladies in the village, his heart and person were still in a very tolerable state of preservation; and if he was no longer the Adonis he had been in his youth, he was still a very respectable bit of antiquity; and as eligible a match, so he thought, as any young lady could desire. Having heard, therefore, of the dissolution of the partnership heretofore existing between Peter and Mary; and taking pity on her forlorn and desolate condition, he determined to marry her himself. I say to marry, because the colonel, in the height and magnanimity of his purpose, had so entirely overlooked the courtship and other tedious formalities that usually precede such an event, as well as the objections that Mary herself might have to this arrangement, that the whole complex series of operations seemed, in his mind, reduced to one single act, and that the very crowning point and consummation of all.

The possibility of failure never entered his mind. Con-

sent, on his part, implied equal readiness on hers. It might do very well for young people, girls and boys in their teens, to spend one, two or three years in such empty ceremonies; but he was too old, and Mary had had too much experience to undergo the indignity of such apprenticeship. Thus resolved, the colonel had come to Mrs. Grant's, to win and carry off, in a single evening, the prize that many a younger rival would gladly have devoted half his life to obtain. He was a little surprised, at finding her in such society; but supposing that Peter and his father had come in merely as a matter of form, to show that there was no hard feeling between the families, he determined to wait till they should retire, that he might thus avoid the necessity of repeating his visit. The deacon, on the other hand, vexed at this untoward interruption, though never suspecting its meaning, glowered malevolently at the colonel, who inwardly chuckling, said to himself, "Ah! he sees at once what I'm after, and can't help feeling a little riled about it. Well! I'm sorry for his disappointment; but it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good."

At this moment, while the colonel was deliberating whether Peter should be invited to his wedding, thinking how awkward it would be for him, and rejoicing that he himself could never, by any possibility, be in the same predicament, there came a knock at the door,—which made all start and stare, and wonder what could be coming, because such a ceremony was never known among the native Totemwellians. Sally ran to answer the summons, and presently those in the parlor heard a remarkably pleasant voice inquire if Mrs. Grant were at home, and then, if she were disengaged. "And tell her," added the voice, "that it is an old friend, Philip Hastings."

If a bombshell had suddenly dropped into that little circle, it could hardly have produced greater excitement than this simple announcement.

"Philip Hastings!" thought the deacon—"what in the world can have brought him here just at this moment of all others? I would rather have seen the evil one himself!"

"Philip Hastings!" thought Peter, with a scowl, "I wonder what Miss Mary 'ill say to that; confound him."

"Philip Hastings!" thought the colonel "if he'll only stay a week, I'll have him for my groomsman!"

"Philip Hastings!" thought Dr. Edgerly, "Well, well! the mush begins to thicken! Stir away, my boys!"

"Philip Hastings!" thought Mary, "can it be? I wonder what he has come for! I wonder if he has changed much! I wonder if he will remember me!" and she started up to run to the door to welcome her old playfellow; but, suddenly pausing, she sat down again by the window, and did her best to look as easy and unconcerned as possible.

"Philip Hastings!" exclaimed Aunt Bethany; "well, I never! Why don't he come in?" and hurrying towards the door, with a mouthful of kisses, she started back at sight of a tall, slender, young man, who saluted her with a grave smile, and asked her, if she remembered him.

"Remember you? I guess I do!" she replied, "but I never should have known you, if I'd met you anywhere else! how you have grow'd! I never see any thing like it! but, come in, do!"

"Is there anybody here?" said Philip, hesitating.

"Oh, no; only some old friends you used to know when you was here before. Let's see if you'll remember 'em;" and, so saying, she urged Philip forward into the room, and thus exposed him to the hostile gaze of one portion of the company, and the friendly, but still more embarrassing, glances of the rest.

There are, perhaps, few more awkward situations than thus returning, after an interval of several years, to a circle of old friends or acquaintance, whom we have never seen since we were boys, and who were even then come to man's estate. The strangeness on either side is far greater than if no previous acquaintance had ever existed. We cannot, at once, divest ourselves of the fear and respect that boys, in our days, at least, always felt towards a full-grown man. We find ourselves continually deferring to them, as if they still possessed the same relative superiority; or, if we are conscious of this feeling, and rebel against it, we are apt to assume an arrogant and self-assuming, or even defiant, tone, that is equally unbecoming to us, and offensive to them.

Nor are they, on the other hand, a whit less sensitive. As we have grown up without their knowledge, they seemed disposed to deny that we have grown up at all. They are jealous of their privileges, and doubtful how far we have a

right to them. It is a serious question with them, whether to treat us as boys or men; and whether the talk should be all of tops and marbles, and what books we read at school, or about the Turkish war, Nebraska, or the next general election. They are all the time afraid, lest they should get above or below our standard, lest they should insult our pride by conversing in a too easy and familiar style, or weary us with disquisitions too profound for our comprehension. They would give the world to know whether to call us Sir or Mr. or plain Johnny, how much attention they ought to show us, and how little, and to be told the exact line which it would be folly to exceed, and rudeness to fall short of. They seem to themselves, all the while, subject to an illusion of the senses, as if they were talking with a man in a mask; so hard is it to believe that the free and enlightened citizen, in dress-coat and whiskers, who looks upon them as an equal, and even dares to combat their opinions, who uses words long enough to spit a dozen little boys on, like so many larks, and talks of the time when he was young, as if it were a thousand years ago, can possibly be identical with the bashful urchin, who hardly dared to lift his eyes above their lowest button, and whom they last saw, peradventure, trundling a hoop, making dirt pies, or strumming a corn-stalk fiddle.

It was, perhaps, some such feeling as I have attempted to describe, that threw such an air of restraint over the meeting of Philip and his old acquaintance, though other causes were not wanting. Deacon Redwood, who, since Mary's return from New York, had felt his hopes revive as to the accomplishment of his favorite purpose, now saw with the utmost disquietude, the fabric which had cost him so much labor, and which he had so nearly brought to completion, threatened with total destruction, and in a manner that he had least expected. If Peter, he reasoned, met with such indifferent success while Mary's affections were entirely disengaged, what hope was there now that this formidable rival had come into the field; a rival, who was at once a familiar friend and an entire stranger, and thus united the unconstrained freedom of an old acquaintance with the delicate reserve, the shyness, and the mysterious charm of the new? What possible combination of circumstances

could be imagined more favorable to the springing up of a mutual affection? And Mary's heart, the deacon knew full well, owing to his own skillful management, was all ready to receive the precious seed. For, though Peter's real, or pretended, devotion had as yet met with no return, it had, at least, awakened her slumbering sensibilities, and given her a dim and struggling consciousness of some great want of her nature yet unsatisfied; in short, though Peter had not made her fall in love with himself, he had brought her into a state where she was all ready to fall in love with somebody else.

And of all the somebodies who might have exerted this magical influence over her affections, Philip Hastings was the very one she was the least able to resist. For, indeed, she was more than half in love with him already. She had loved him when they were children together, as she said, with a sister's love; and her heart had continued faithful to him ever since. She had followed him out into the world; and, during the many years that there had been no visible intercourse between them, innumerable wishes, hopes, and fears, and other airy messengers, tracking the way with nimble feet, till the path they traveled became a broad and beaten highway, had she sent to greet him. But, by degrees, and, especially of later years, this love had become more and more subtle and etherealized; the image of him she had cherished began to assume a more delicate relation, and she no longer dared, even in the privacy of her own thoughts, to use that freedom which she now deemed fit only for a child. Though so many miles asunder, her soul blushed at the consciousness of his presence, and in their imaginary interviews the warm, sisterly kisses and embraces, with which she had been wont to meet him, gave place to the most coy and bashful timidity. She could not remember when this change began, and she wondered how it was that, when she loved him more than ever, she should be far less able to express it. Thus, for many years, this single passion had kept entire possession of her soul; and even the interest she had felt in Mr. Mason, though it had at first excited her jealousy, seemed, in some unaccountable manner, gradually to sink and fade away in those broader, brighter beams, like stars in the morning light. If the object of this distant

worship had been merely a phantom of the imagination, the appearance of the one whom that phantom was supposed to represent would at once have dissipated her unreal dreams; but, as she had a foundation of truth to begin upon, and as her memory had, at least, quite as much to do as her invention in the creating and adorning of her idol, she was spared any such mortifying shock.

And, indeed, the improvement that had taken place in Philip, since his departure from Totemwell, might easily have kept pace with even a more ardent imagination. He was tall and finely formed, though by no means distinguished by that breadth of shoulder and strength of limb for which James's heroes are so remarkable. In these respects he was decidedly inferior to Peter, who, mindful of his old hate, and comparing Philip's slender build with his own bulkier proportions, said to himself, "Well! I could flog him now, easy enough, I know!"

Perhaps so, most stout-hearted Peter! but, before you make the trial, I advise you to look again, not at his thews and sinews, for they are neither so full nor so brawny as your own; not at his mouth, for it is curved with poetry and love; nor at his eye, even, for it is soft and merciful; nor at his expression, for just at this moment it is indolent, abstracted, and almost sluggish; but wait a while, till he warms in conversation, and then you will become conscious of a soul of fire under that luxurious exterior, that, if it should be fully aroused, would wither your mere physical strength like grass.

But was Philip ever going to warm up? It would really seem that he was not,—at least this evening. He had, indeed, on first entering, given Dr. Edgerly a sufficiently warm and friendly greeting, and had shaken hands in a civil sort of a way with the rest of the gentlemen; but to Mary he could hardly be said to have spoken at all. So slight and cold was his salutation, that she would have much preferred that he should have passed her without any notice whatever; for she would then have had, at least, the satisfaction of hoping that he had not seen her, or had failed to recognize his old playfellow in such a stupid old woman. But he had seen and recognized her, plainly, without any assistance from Aunt Bethany; she had risen to meet him, in

spite of her preparation, all confusion, smiling, blushing, longing to throw her arms round his neck, and put her lips to his, as in times past, yet withheld by a sense of maidenly modesty stronger than brazen gates or iron bars; and he, how had he borne it all? Without even the shadow of a smile, her cold hand just touching his, a slight inclination of the head, and still slighter "How do you do, Miss Grant?" and then he turned away, and took a seat as far from her as possible, by the side of Colonel Totling.

And this was the event of her whole life, to which she had looked forward so many years, not indeed with a certainty that it would happen, but with a certainty that if it ever did happen, it would be the happiest moment of her existence. She would gladly have escaped out of the room, but she felt conscious that Deacon Redwood's eye was upon her, and her pride came to her relief. She sat down and tried to collect her scattered thoughts, and to repair as well as she could her scheme of life and happiness, which had just received so terrible a shock, in losing, as she believed forever, its principal ornament and support.

"It was a beautiful dream!" she thought, "but it was only a dream! and it's over now. I'll try and dream no more. Yet, what is this world without dreams? it is like a bird without wings, or a soap bubble without light. Oh! why is it that our fancies are so warm and glowing when the reality is always so dark and cold? Certainly, there must be some meaning in it I've never found! perhaps they are the broken fragments of a better life, intended to show us what we should have been, or what we shall be; and surely we should die of despair if we could not thus anticipate in this wretched, miserable world a little bit of heaven!"

In the meantime, while Mary was thus mourning over the sudden downfall of all her hopes, and groping sadly among the ruins in search of any consolation that still remained, the unconscious—though perhaps we shall hereafter find reason to say conscious—author of her distress had withdrawn to the farther side of the room, and there entered into an apparently interminable conversation with the colonel and Aunt Bethany, one at each ear, as to all that had happened in Totemwell since his departure, all that had befallen himself, and all that he knew concerning certain po-

litical events and characters with whom the colonel seemed, from his own account, to be on terms of the closest intimacy. This conversation was very characteristic both of the colonel and Aunt Bethany; but we decline to give it any more in detail, lest it should prove no more interesting to the reader than it was to Philip.

Deacon Redwood took little part in the dialogue, but he made amends for this inactivity by maintaining the strictest watch over Philip and Mary, keeping his eyes almost incessantly moving from one to the other, as if fearful of losing any expression, however trifling, that might serve as an index to their feelings. Mary had now raised her head, and was listening with a heart-felt interest to the brief account that Aunt Bethany had extorted from Philip of his own history for the last eight years. The light of love was so plainly in her eyes, and she understood so little the art of concealing her emotions, that it was an easy matter for so acute an observer as the deacon, to read a great deal of what was passing in her mind. But with Philip, the task was more difficult. The air of melancholy, almost morose, that rested like a veil on his features all the while the others were talking, and which occasionally darkened into a frown—the forced animation of his reply, and the careless abandonment of his whole manner, showed a mind ill at ease and at war with itself; but his passions lay too deep and afforded too sluggish manifestation to enable the deacon to arrive at any positive conclusion with such limited opportunities of observation. He had waited eagerly to see how Philip and Mary would conduct themselves at their first meeting, and we need not say that Philip's behavior afforded him the highest gratification.

"I was alarmed too soon!" he said to himself; "he has no more thoughts of falling in love with her than I have; and though she is well enough inclined that way, it won't take many such shocks to disenchant her." Still continuing, however, to watch Philip, he saw how little he was interested in the conversation, and how constantly his eyes wandered towards the window where Mary was sitting; and as it seemed to him well nigh impossible that any young man should be even a single evening in Mary's society without being attracted, he determined to guard against the an-

ticipated danger by informing him, at the first convenient opportunity, of the engagement already existing between her and Peter.

Dr. Edgerly watched Philip's motions quite as intently as the deacon, but from very different motives. The one had studied human nature for his own advantage, the other for the amusement it afforded; with one it was regarded simply as a means, with the other it was exalted into the dignity of an end. Drawn back into his obscure corner, with half-shut, sleepy eyes, which yet give the sense of sight a more spiritual and immediate power, as if one saw directly into the heart of another, like a man beholding the stars at noonday from the bottom of a well, the doctor gave himself up without interruption to his favorite amusement of studying the weaknesses and passions of the company before him, who were thus made unconsciously indeed to exhibit themselves for his entertainment.

These spies in society are far more common than is usually supposed, and for my part I know of nothing which deserves to be more strongly reprobated. One silent man is more formidable than a whole room full of talkers. They have themselves to look out for, but he from his ambush marks all the joints and rivets of your armor, with as much coolness and precision as Locksley aimed his cloth-yard gray-goose shafts against De Bracy. While you suppose him wrapped in his own stupidity, and utterly oblivious of all that is passing, it is ten chances to one that he is at that very moment making himself merry over your folly, hugging himself with delight at some speech of yours which you no doubt considered particularly clever, and wondering how any human being in his senses can consent to make himself so ridiculous. Such an one can be compared to nothing so fitly as an owl, whose invincible gravity makes all the feathered songsters of the grove seem utterly trifling and contemptible, till they join their forces to rout him out of their society; and in the same way all who love to hear themselves talk, should never suffer a silent man to remain among them, but drive him out whenever he appears, for they may be sure he will show no mercy to them.

Dr Edgerly's faith was not in the least shaken by the opening that Deacon Redwood, as well as Mary, had con-

sidered so unpromising. On the contrary, he thought it a most favorable indication.

"If he had sought the wide world over," he said to himself, "he could not have found a surer means to awaken an interest in her heart, or to confirm any that may have been there already. And it's very plain that he couldn't have come to Totemwell for any other purpose. He certainly has no thoughts of buying up the Little Trebec, or of developing our unequaled capabilities. The only capabilities he cares for are those of the little heart that is going pit-a-pat yonder; and the only water-power is lodged in a tear. And besides, if he had been indifferent to her, he would have addressed her in a very different manner. Indifference is always civil and polite, in one at least who has any claims to be called a gentleman—we must be conscious of some slight degree of affection before we can venture to be rude to a lady; and it *was* rude to take so little notice of one who had such claims upon him. And he is longing to make it up now—I can see that plain enough—and would if it were not for shame. Well! all I hope is, that he won't go so far on this track that there'll be no turning back, but we shall see what we shall see."

At length, about half-past eight, there came a pause in the cross-fire hitherto kept up by Aunt Bethany and Colonel Totling. The deacon thought his time had come, and turning towards Philip in such a way as to deprive his rivals of all advantage of their position, he was about to inquire whether he found Totemwell the same as when he left it, when Philip suddenly rising, advanced to Aunt Bethany, and said he believed it was time for him to go.

"What! going so soon! I have seen nothing of you yet, and you haven't spoke a word to Mary. I thought, of course, you'd come to stay all night, and I've been and had a bed made up on purpose."

"I'm sorry I have given you so much trouble; but my trunk is at the tavern, and I expect to leave early in the morning, so I had better go; good evening!"

"But stop a minute!" cried Aunt Bethany, detaining him by holding on to his button; "you don't really mean you're going away the first thing to-morrow morning, without seeing anybody either? I never heard of such a thing

in my life! Why! a week is the very least you ought to stop; you don't know how many there are want to see you. At any rate, you might stay one day."

Dr. Edgerly now came to the assistance of Aunt Bethany, but Philip still continued deaf to all their entreaties. He had business of importance, so he said, that must be attended to; otherwise he should be happy to remain in Totemwell a month.

"Business!" cried Dr. Edgerly, "how I hate the word! it's always in the way when one asks a favor; but you didn't use to be so industrious. Here, Mary, do you come and see if you can't persuade Mr. Hastings to let this important business go for a day or two; it's nothing after all, I dare say, but these youngsters are always in such a terrible hurry!"

Mary replied without looking up, though she might have done so without danger, for Philip never once turned his head in that direction, "Mr. Hastings of course knows his own business best, and I don't see but you and Aunt Bethany have said all that could be said."

She longed to add, "I am very sorry he thinks it necessary to go so soon," or something to that effect, but she could not; and when she again looked up, Philip was gone. Dr. Edgerly went soon after, grumbling all the way home, and long after he got there, at what he called the most unaccountable piece of obstinacy that ever man was guilty of.

Deacon Redwood waited till the clock struck nine, and then finding that Colonel Totling gave no signs of retiring, he and Peter withdrew together, leaving the son, or at least the grandson of Mars in undisputed possession. It was a trying moment for the colonel; for, though he had been so much in ladies' society, he had never popped the question in his life, and of course wanted the confidence that practice would have inspired. He had supposed it would be the easiest thing in the world, yet now he thought it would be far easier to face, without winking, the most tremendous fire of blank cartridges, or lead on his devoted followers to storm a desperate patch of water-melons, as he had often done during the bloody one-day wars that raged every autumn over the fair fields of his native State.

In short, the valiant colonel was oppressed with a sudden

fit of modesty, or bashfulness; but the sensation being so entirely novel, for he had never experienced any thing like it before, he very naturally mistook its nature, and called it love. Very little, indeed, there was of it, whether love or modesty; but, fortunately, a little sensibility went a great way with the colonel, who had learned its value, as poor people learn the value of butter, by going without it, and was therefore fain to accept whatever substitute might offer. He might have continued to derive considerable satisfaction from this pleasing contemplation; but as he was a very disinterested man, he thought less of his own pleasure than of Mary's, and determined to keep her no longer ignorant of the honor he intended to confer upon her. He accordingly gallanted his chair across the room in a manner eminently characteristic, and with as much grave politeness as if it had been a lady he was handing out to dance, though it must be confessed that his sitting down in it the next moment rather tended to weaken that impression.

"I suppose, Miss Grant," he began,—he was the only person in Totemwell who called her by that title—"I suppose you have already discovered the reason of my present visit, or if not, it will undoubtedly occur to you on a moment's reflection."

Mary reflected the required moment, and then replied abstractedly that she did not know.

"But surely you can guess," said the colonel.

"No," said Mary.

"Do you suppose I came to see you or Aunt Bethany?" said he.

"Yes," said Mary.

"Well, which?"

"No, I should suppose not."

"This Peter Redwood is rather a clever young fellow."

"Very warm, indeed!"

"But young! dreadfully young! a mere boy! no stability, no mind of his own, no solidity of character.

"Do you know I wondered, when I first heard of your engagement, how a young lady of your sense and—and every way so superior, should ever have supposed she could be happy with him—a man she couldn't possibly respect or esteem! now it's my opinion, that in all such matters the wife

should always be able to look up to the husband, don't you think so, Miss Grant?"

"Yes, very much so."

"Excuse me, Miss Grant, but I don't think you quite understand my meaning. I was saying that, in my opinion, a woman ought to be able to respect and esteem her husband. And I wished to know whether you agreed with me."

"I don't see how she could be happy without it."

"No, to be sure not; she couldn't be happy, that's just it. I'm glad to see that you have such sensible and correct views on this subject, Miss Grant; but it is no more than I expected. I always knew that it would not be long, before you would discover that he had not sufficient weight of character, or standing in society, to enable you to feel that degree of respect towards him that you would wish. I always said that if Miss Grant married at all, it would not be a person of no consequence whatever, like Peter Redwood; but some one whose age, whose position, whose whole character in short, should be such as to command her unhesitating respect and confidence. Said I right, Miss Grant?"

"I shall certainly never marry a man that I don't respect; but at present I do not expect to marry at all, so that I am in no danger of making an unwise choice."

"Not marry! why not? what can have induced you to form such a resolution?"

"Well," replied Mary with a sudden effort; "perhaps it's because I don't approve of marrying, or perhaps I can't find anyone to suit me. There are not many men, you know, that would answer your description."

"No, there are not; such men are rare; but suppose, for instance, that such a one should present himself—one, I mean, that you could respect and honor, and whose rank and station pointed him out as a suitable husband—what would you say then?"

"I should wait first to hear what he had to say himself, I think."

"Yes; but suppose, I mean, that he should offer himself as your husband, what should you say then?"

"I don't know what I should say until I had seen him, and knew more about him."

"Why, what more could you wish to know about a man than those things I have mentioned?"

"Oh, a great many things."

"What are they, if you will be so good?"

"Oh, I should wish to know exactly how he looked; whether he was tall or short, what sort of hair he had, and what eyes."

"And suppose you should be told all these?"

"Ah, then there are as many more that I could not be told: as how he walked, and talked, and smiled; what kind of expression he had, and a thousand things that I must see and hear for myself; for I should wish to know how he would look to me, you know, and not to other people."

"And are all these things to be considered in your choice of a husband?"

"Certainly; and I haven't told you the half either."

"And supposing that you should find a man in all these respects to your liking, you would marry him, of course?"

"No, not of course, exactly; I must first find out whether I love him."

"Why, if he was in all respects to your liking, what is that but loving?"

"Dear me! Colonel Totling, how can you be so ignorant? I don't wonder Aunt Bethany is laughing at you."

"I was not aware," replied the colonel, reddening violently, "that I had said any thing so ridiculous. I"—

"Oh, never mind; Aunt Bethany's laugh never hurts anybody. Besides, I dare say she was, after all, only laughing at some thing that happened a hundred years ago; she and her knitting are very merry together sometimes, I assure you. She smiles sometimes all day long. But don't you know that love (a woman's love at least, yours may be more sensible) is the most capricious, unreasonable thing in existence? At any rate, I'm sure, in my own case, a man might have every perfection under the sun, and yet I should never dream of falling in love with him; while another, with not half his good qualities, might carry my heart captive with a look."

"Yes, I knew very well that this was a school-girl's idea of love; but I supposed you had a more sensible view of this important matter. I supposed that one so sensible as

I judged Miss Grant to be, would wish to found her love on some more solid and durable qualities; and that, if she respected a man, and could find no serious objection to him, either on the score of rank or character, that such an one she would choose for her husband."

"Miss Grant is very sorry to forfeit your good opinion; but it has always been her misfortune to be esteemed a great deal wiser than she really is. I'm sure I shall be glad when my friends cease to expect more from me than anybody else. It's really dreadful to have such a reputation as I have! I believe folks think I'm forty years old; and if I do any thing the least bit out of the way, that is, not quite so wise as my usual behavior, why, they say, they didn't really suppose that Mary Grant could do such a thing. I declare, I've a great mind to commit some monstrous piece of folly, to convince them, once for all, that I'm no wiser than other people, and then, after that, I could be as silly as I pleased; and if I ever did do any thing particularly wise, I should be sure and get some credit for it."

"Ah! whatever you do, you may be sure you will never forfeit either my respect or good opinion; and you know me well enough, I presume, to believe that my approbation is never lightly bestowed—never, indeed, except on what I consider good and sufficient grounds."

"Well, if you will think me wise, I can't help it; but it's very hard if noone will believe me."

"I respect and esteem you more than all other women, and I am now about to give you a proof of that respect and esteem, the greatest possible, and which can leave in your mind not even the shadow of a doubt of my entire and perfect sincerity in what I am now about to declare."

Mary listened in wonder, while the colonel, squaring himself in his chair, and bringing himself into a military attitude, thus continued.

"I have concluded, Miss Grant, after mature reflection and deliberation, and knowing perfectly, as I do, all the momentous consequences that are involved in such a step, from my firm and unalterable conviction of your many virtues and excellent qualities, that it would be impossible for me to find, in the whole circle of my female acquaintance, any one who would make me so desirable a com-

panion as yourself; and, as I concluded, after your rejection of Peter Redwood, which rejection, I need not say, received my fullest approbation, that your choice would probably fall upon a man of somewhat maturer age and experience, and, as I flattered myself that I possessed, in some slight degree, at least, most of those qualities, personal and otherwise, that usually command the respect and affection of your sex, I have overlooked all those distinctions that might be supposed to exist in our social position, and have determined to make you an entirely free and voluntary offer of my hand and heart, trusting that when once you are the loved and honored wife of Colonel Totling, you can hold up your head with the highest and proudest in the land."

"I am sorry that you should have wasted so much time in a matter of so little importance, or so much of your kindness and condescension on one who is so little able to appreciate it. I assure you, I am much too modest in my expectations ever to presume even to think of a man so far above me as Colonel Totling, in age, in experience, and, especially in his social position. To marry him, would, indeed, be an honor, but an honor as much beyond my wishes as my deserts."

"But, my dear Miss Grant, you misunderstood me; I"—

"I should be glad to think so; but I understood you only too well. I hope you will have no difficulty in understanding me. As I told you before, I have no intention of marrying, and, if I had," she was going to add, "you are the last person I should choose;" but she hesitated, and finally left the sentence unfinished. It was false mercy, for the colonel, taking encouragement from this hesitation, filled up the blank in his own way.

"If you had, dear Miss Grant, you were going to say, you knew noone you should prefer to me. But, why not change that intention? A bad resolution, you know, is best kept being broken."

"But I don't consider it a bad resolution; and I had not the remotest idea of saying what you supposed; in short, Colonel Totling, since you will not take a less decided answer, I do not love you, I never could love you, and I

never was more surprised in my life, than at what I have just heard."

"You don't mean to say that you refuse me!—me, Colonel Totling?"

"That is just what I mean to say, exactly; and I cannot imagine, for my part, how you could ever have expected any thing else, especially considering our very slight acquaintance."

"If we knew each other longer," cried the colonel, catching desperately at the straws that Mary, out of her weak compassion and tenderness, threw out to him, "don't you think that?"—

"No; that would make no difference; there is no length of acquaintance that could change my opinion in this respect; so I hope you will not press the matter any farther."

"Well!" ejaculated the colonel, rising, and walking once or twice across the room, "well!" then pausing in front of Aunt Bethany, he added, "she has refused me, do you hear that, Mrs. Grant? She has refused me,—me, Colonel Totling! There's your sensible Miss Grant! She might have been Mrs. Colonel Totling, but she chose to be Mrs. Nobody. I make no objection; of courseevery one has a right to choose for herself; I only think it shows her sense, that's all. Good evening."

Aunt Bethany had sat through all this scene without speaking a word. While the colonel and Mary were conversing, they spoke, most of the time, in so low a tone that the old lady, who was now getting a little deaf, heard only an occasional syllable; and when the colonel finally addressed himself directly to her, her surprise was so great, that before she found words to express it, he was gone. She now rose, and coming to Mary's side, laid her hands tenderly on her head, and having, by this mute action, expressed a world of sympathy, she went softly up stairs to bed, leaving Mary to the solitude she so much desired. It was long past midnight when Mary followed; but, weary as she was, she found no rest, and, for the first time in her life, she counted all the loitering hours, as they received, like tardy schoolboys, their allotted punishment at the hands of the stern old clock below. If any wonder what there was in her situa-

tion to produce such a degree of mental excitement, they must remember, that in a life so circumscribed as hers, and furnishing so few objects of absorbing interest, the loss of an ideal, like Philip, was not easily to be got over, to say nothing of the distress that must necessarily arise from the recollection of her interview with Colonel Totling. Two events like these, happening in a single day, might well excuse even a greater degree of agitation, and almost justify her passionate exclamation, that she believed the whole world had conspired to make her wretched.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN EXPLOSION.

Dr. Edgerly came over the next morning, to inquire if they had seen any thing of Philip Hastings.

"Not a syllable," said Aunt Bethany; "I supposed he had gone long before this."

"He hasn't gone; he changed his mind for some reason or other, or, more probably, no reason; for Shorty told me—he sees every thing, you know—that he was at the tavern when the stage started, and there was nobody in it except an old man and two ladies. So I inquired at the bar, and, sure enough, his trunk was still in his room, but he himself had gone out. I had some thoughts of asking him to dinner, and having you to meet him; but as there was no knowing when he would be back, I concluded to wait, and ask him to-morrow—that is, if he should be here, which I think it most likely he will. It's my opinion, in spite of his odd behavior last evening, that he didn't come here for nothing, and that he will find business enough to keep him here, at least a fortnight. You can tell Mary, if you choose, that I told you so."

Dr. Edgerly made several other attempts, in the course of the day, to meet with Philip, intending, as he told his wife, to have a good long talk with him about a certain lady, not a thousand miles off, and correct any false impressions he might have received; but he did not succeed, for Philip had taken a fishing rod immediately after breakfast, and gone to spend the day in angling in one of the many bubbling brooks that swelled the mighty torrent of The Little Trebec. He did not return till nearly sundown, and then had not caught a single fish, which led the wits of the tavern, and especially Squire Buckle, who was himself a most devoted brother of the angle, to break sundry jests at his expense, as if this were owing to a lack of skill; though it may be doubted if any of them would have been a whit

more successful, if they had sat for hours in the same place, with their rods resting on the water, and so totally oblivious of external objects, that nothing less than a jerk sufficient to throw them into the brook, could have recalled them to a consciousness of their bodily existence.

Yet, this was the case with Philip; he had wandered away into the woods, without giving any heed to where he was going, in search of nothing, indeed, but solitude and nature,—

"To feed his fancy with fond dreams of youth's bright summer day,
When, rushing forth like untamed colt, the reckless, truant boy
Wandered through green woods all day long, a mighty heart of joy."

He had stopped about noon, at a lonely farm house, he found far up among the hills, and eaten a bowl of bread and milk; and then, turning back towards the village, but by a different path, and sitting down every now and then, not so much to rest as to prolong his enjoyment, he was surprised by the sleepy shadows that were stretching and yawning most portentously all through the wood.

After doing full justice to a hearty supper—for Philip had not yet the fear of dyspepsia before his eyes—he spent half an hour in an agony of doubt, as to whether he should pass the evening at the tavern, or call on Dr. Edgerly; till, having finally concluded on the latter, he took his hat and walked straight over to Mrs. Grant's, though he knew the doctor lived in quite a different direction. Perhaps, however, he expected to find him there. But Mary's conduct is not so easily explained; for, after spending the whole day in running into the front room, opening the shutters, and peeping out into the street, for no other reason in the world, than to see if she could not see Philip Hastings, as she told Aunt Bethany, when that excellent lady expressed her fears, lest such frequent tramping should wear out her best carpet—after spending the whole day, I say, in this manner, it was certainly, to say the least, very extraordinary, that when he came where she could see him without any more trouble than raising her eyes, she should have been unwilling to make such a trifling effort. It was, I repeat, very extraordinary, and some might suppose it argued a fickle and inconstant temper, as if she didn't know her own

mind as well as she should; but, about this, I am not prepared to offer an opinion.

Philip had hardly taken his seat, when Deacon Redwood, followed by Peter, made his appearance, somewhat out of breath, and in a state of very undignified perspiration. Aunt Bethany was not a little surprised at seeing him in this condition; her respect for him sensibly diminished, and, I believe, he never stood so high again in her opinion, either for wisdom or sanctity; not, indeed, that she was conscious of any such feeling, but the idea we form of another's character, is made up of a thousand elements, the slightest of which is yet so essential, that it cannot be lost without modifying the whole. The deacon evidently felt aggrieved and injured at Philip's staying a day longer, as if, by announcing his intention of setting off the next morning, he had laid himself under a personal obligation to do so. However, being of a very placable disposition, the deacon soon got over this little difficulty, and manifested his entire forgiveness of Philip's offense, by entering into a private, and confidential conversation with him, on a subject he had intended to introduce the preceding evening.

"You don't find Totemwell changed a great deal since you left us, I suppose, Mr. Hastings?"

"I notice a great change somewhere," replied Philip, "but I conclude it is mostly in myself."

"Ah yes," said the deacon, with a paternal smile, "you have seen the world, and our little village has lost most of its former consequence; but I hope it is not so with regard to your old friends."

"I hope not; though they say that is one of the first lessons the world teaches."

"But we haven't been entirely idle," said the deacon, suddenly warming and coming to the point; "here's your old friend, Peter, has made about as good use of his time as you have; and Mary yonder, I dare say you hardly knew her."

He pronounced these last words in a tone intended only for Philip's ear; but Mary heard every syllable, and listened breathlessly for the reply.

"I should have known her anywhere, said Philip."

"Indeed! I should hardly have thought that; we think

she has altered a great deal since you saw her last; don't you think she has improved?"

"Yes, I think she has."

"We think that she is something rather extraordinary in the way of beauty, or Peter does, at any rate; but I suppose you have not heard of their engagement. They'd have been married before this, if it hadn't been for the death of Aunt Rebecca."

"I understood that engagement was broken off," cried Philip, with sudden vehemence, and as if he had been surprised into the confession.

"Broken off! Oh, no, indeed; where could you have got that impression, or how did you know that there was any engagement?"

"I heard it from very good authority; but I was told afterwards, on what I considered equally good, that it had been broken."

"It's a mistake, whoever told you; but don't speak quite so loud, I'm afraid the rest will hear you."

"I am perfectly willing they should; I, for my part, have nothing to conceal; but since you are so positive on this subject, I shall not be satisfied, till I hear it from her own mouth."

Then, abruptly rising, and coming close to Mary, he exclaimed in a low voice, but loud enough for all to hear; "Excuse me Miss Grant, but is it really true, that you are still engaged to this Mr. Redwood?"

"No," replied Mary, with a painful effort, "it is not, and Mr. Redwood knows it very well."

"Did I hear you aright?" cried the deacon; also rising and confronting Mary in his turn; "did I understand you to say, that you no longer considered yourself engaged to my son?"

Mary assented, with an appearance of surprise at his asking her such a question.

"And may I ask on what grounds you justify to yourself this breach of a solemn engagement?"

"Mr. Peter Redwood can best answer that question; if, indeed, he has not informed you already. I can only say that it was he that broke the engagement, and not I."

The deacon glanced from Mary to Peter, and there saw

in his evident confusion and embarrassment, a confirmation of all his worst suspicions.

"So," he cried, turning suddenly upon his son; "this comes of your going to New York. You"—

"It's no such thing!" cried Peter, in a tone halfway between that of a whipped schoolboy and a bully. "I didn't break the engagement, she broke it herself; I've got her note now; she knows I never thought of breaking it; I didn't know it *was* broken."

"Well," said the deacon, turning again to Mary; "what do you say to that?"

"Only this: that if Mr. Redwood wishes to avoid the responsibility of breaking the engagement, I am perfectly willing to relieve him of it. Since the engagement is broken, it is little consequence who did it; but I beg you will spare me all further questioning, as I don't intend ever to open my mouth on the subject again."

"There is some mystery here," said the deacon, "that I don't quite understand; but if there has been any quarrel—if Peter has offended you in any way—I am sure he is ready to make amends. Has there been any thing of the sort?"

"Not that I know of," said Peter sullenly.

"Do you know of any? is there any neglect or want of attention on his part, to displease you?"

"I have already told you, that I have not another word to say on the subject."

"But you might, at least, condescend to explain matters a little; the whole thing, at present, seems so capricious and unreasonable, not to call it by a harsher epithet."

"I am perfectly aware, that my conduct may be subject to a great deal of misconstruction, but I must endeavor to submit to that as patiently as I can; it is long since I ceased to expect any thing like generosity from Mr. Peter Redwood."

"Do you mean to say that he could explain it, if he chose?"

"Certainly I do."

"And I say I can't," cried Peter, "and if I could, I wouldn't; so that's all about it."

"Very well," said Philip, "since the young gentleman is so careful of his reputation, I must do what I can to help

him, and tell what I know on the subject; that is, if Miss Grant has no objection."

"I have none," replied Mary; "but how in the world," thought she, "could he know any thing about it? Oh, Mr. Mason must have told him."

"Excuse me, Mr. Hastings," said the deacon; "but if there is any thing to be said on this delicate subject, I would rather hear it from my son, than from a stranger."

"Certainly," replied Philip; "but in case his recollection should fail him; you can ask him if he remembers a Miss Nancy Harris, he saw in New York, and also what passed between them. If he should forget any of the particulars, I shall be happy to supply them."

"Perhaps, sir;" cried the deacon, "since you are so well informed, you will be kind enough to give us the whole story."

"There is no story; the affair is perfectly simple; your son, it seems, took a fancy to the young lady, and offered himself; she didn't take a fancy to him exactly, but, supposing him to be free, and her mind being, as I judged, just then in a rather unsettled condition, she accepted him; in short, they were engaged to be"—

"It's all a darned lie," cried Peter, "every word of it. I never offered myself to her, or anybody else. Just because I flirted with her a little bit, she must needs take it into her head that I was in love with her, though I told her at the very first of it, that I was engaged to Mary; and I'd have told Mary so long ago, only she wouldn't let me."

"A mighty affair, truly!" cried the deacon, laughing pleasantly; "a little innocent flirtation; but now tell me honestly, Miss Mary, didn't you find some nice young man to console yourself for his desertion? I should think it would be no difficult matter, in a large city like New York. Ah, my dear, there's no need of your blushing at such a rate. I dare say no harm's done, and it's all the better, when there's something to forgive and forget on both sides. Come now, kiss and make up, like good children."

"If I did blush," cried Mary, highly indignant at the deacon's suggestion, and all the more, because there was so much truth in it, and at the same time glancing at Philip, to see what effect her embarrassment had upon him—"if I

did blush, it was not for myself; it was to see a person who has long been so near, if not dear to me, and whose honor, therefore, was almost as sacred as my own, show himself capable of so much meanness. I didn't suppose it had been in human nature; but if he expects to gain my favor by slandering a beautiful and charming woman, and one that he has injured enough already, I can assure him, that he is very much mistaken. I told Mr. Redwood, at the time I first heard of his conduct, that I wished our intercourse hereafter to cease; and I now repeat my determination never to see or speak to him again."

So saying, Mary arose, like a queen in tragedy, and, taking a candle from the table, she proceeded deliberately to light it, and was about leaving the room, when the deacon stopped her, exclaiming, "We will not trouble you so far, Miss Mary; some other time, perhaps, when matters have become a little clearer, we may have another conversation on the subject, when I trust to be able to convince you of the injustice of your suspicions. At present, I wish you all a very good evening."

"Fool! dolt! idiot!" he muttered, as he and Peter walked away from the house; "was folly so hard to find in New York, or are you so hard to satisfy, that you must needs pitch on the very worst? Were there no drinking shops, no gambling saloons, no bawdy houses, no mock auctions, where you could play the fool, and none be the wiser, but you must go and engage yourself to another, right under her nose, and hadn't sense enough to keep it secret! Why, if you had spent all your life in trying to find ways to make yourself ridiculous, you couldn't have done better. But, come, tell me all about this fool's business."

"Why, what do you mean? you talk just as if"—

"Tush! you didn't suppose, I hope, that I was simple enough to believe one word of all you said in at the widow's; tell me the story, and mind, if you attempt to deceive me in the smallest particular, you never touch one dollar of my money. You've thrown enough away already in all conscience."

"A pretty piece of business too!" said the deacon when Peter had finished, "well, you may as well, give up all hope of ever marrying Mary Grant. After all the trouble I have gone

through with, and when every thing was so near completed! Faugh! it fairly makes my blood run cold when I think of it."

"I don't care; she's mighty proud and snappish, and I think for my part I've got a good riddance. The old woman's property can't amount to much anyhow."

"Hold your tongue! don't let me! bah! you don't know a word of all you're talking about. A good riddance! though perhaps you think half a million a good riddance."

"Half a million dollars!"

"Yes, half a million dollars; you understand that I hope?"

"What in thunder do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say, that by not marrying Mary Grant you have lost five hundred thousand dollars—neither more nor less."

"Lost five hundred thousand dollars! but why can't you tell a fellow right out, and not be bothering him in this way?"

"I didn't suppose it would give you so much pleasure; but in plain English, Mary Grant is heiress to property in New York to the amount I have mentioned, and if you had married her, of course it would have been yours."

"Furiation! and why didn't you tell me o' that sooner? it's all your own fault entirely, every bit of it; how in time was I to know any thing about it? If you hadn't been so all-fired sly, this wouldn't ha' happened."

"I didn't know it myself until very recently, that is with any degree of certainty, and I didn't dare to say any thing to you about it, for fear of disappointing you in case it shouldn't be as I supposed."

"But are you quite sure it's so now? how did you find it out?"

"It's too long a story to tell to-night; but I have been this long time making inquiries after Mary's relations, and have at last been successful. They live in New York, and are very wealthy."

"If I'd only known it a month sooner! but does she know any thing about it?"

"About that I am not perfectly sure. I had begun to suppose, from one or two things that I have noticed lately, that she had in some way obtained some clue, and when this journey to New York was started, I felt almost sure that had something to do with it; but I am now of opinion that

she knows no more than ever—at least nothing of any consequence."

"And are you going to tell her?"

The deacon looked, a few seconds, straight at Peter, and Peter looked straight at him.

"Not yet," said the deacon.

Then they both took their candles, and going out of opposite doors, without speaking another word, went off to bed.

It is now time to return to Aunt Bethany and her two young companions. After the deacon's departure, nothing was said for several minutes. The spirit that had sustained Mary so nobly during the stormy interview we have just before described, seemed to have failed her the moment it was no longer needed; and, leaning her head on her hand, she looked out at the dark shadows of the poplars before the windows; while Philip, scarcely less agitated, walked with uneven steps up and down the room. At length, pausing in his walk and bending down over her, he said, "Mary, I should like to see the old garden once more, to see if it looks as it did the last time you and I were there together. Will you go with me?"

We should hardly be believed if we told what a complete revulsion this simple address produced on Mary's feelings. She forgot at once all the angry and bitter thoughts that vexed her; and, rising with an alacrity she would have been glad the next moment to recall, she expressed her readiness to accompany him, in terms sufficiently warm and cordial, though with somewhat less ardor than if the recollection of his former cold and distant manner had not imposed a certain degree of restraint. As she was returning from the front room, whither she had gone to get her bonnet and shawl, for the evening was a little damp, Aunt Bethany stopped her a moment to give her the usual old ladies' word of caution.

"Don't stay out long, will you dear? for the ground is very damp; and besides, I don't think it's hardly proper for you to be out alone after nine o'clock with a gentleman, though to be sure he's a minister's son, and don't wear whiskers either, so that makes a difference."

"How much difference?" said Mary smiling, "half an hour!"

"Well, I don't know as half past 'll be any too late; it's almost as light as day, and I shall be sitting up. He's certainly one o' the very finest young men I ever laid eyes on, don't you think so?"

"I have hardly laid eyes on him yet, for the room has been so dark both evenings he was here, and he has sat so far from me" (and I have dared to look at him so little, she might have added), "that I should hardly know him again if I should meet him. But as far as I can see, he looks astonishingly like Mr. Mason, even more than I had expected, and his voice sounds like his too."

"Yes, I noticed that the very first thing; but you know Mr. Mason told us they had been often mistaken for each other. I think it's the most wonderful resemblance I ever see."

"So do I; but I mustn't keep him waiting any longer. We'll go out the back door, if you please, Mr. Hastings; does the kitchen look natural?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Philip, "every thing looks natural as life, though perhaps not quite so large. Those tongs, I remember when I could hardly manage them with both hands, and there's the same old slice, and the rush bottomed chairs as straight between the shoulders as ever; I declare I could kiss them all. And I should like to see the mortar we used to crack nuts on, and the tin kitchen and reflector; but do you still make that old fashioned Johnny-cake I loved so well, that they used to bake standing up before the fire?"

"Leaning against a flat-iron? oh yes, we have it very often; if you'll come here to-morrow to supper you shall have as much as you want, and molasses, too, if you still like it."

"There's our nest," cried Philip, as after passing through the porch, they came out into the narrow grass-plot that separated the house from the garden.

"Why, haven't you forgotten that yet?" cried Mary.

"I have forgotten nothing; not a flower, not a blade of grass, but I know just where to look for it; but I don't remember ever seeing this tree before."

"This one on our right?"

"Yes, where did it come from?"

"It is your pip! your poor little pip that you used to love so dearly! I didn't think you'd forget that."

"What, that tall scraggly thing! oh, what a melancholy thing it is to grow old!"

"Yes, if our friends forget us."

"Or if we outgrow our former innocence and beauty, and then can't forget ourselves; but I wish you would call me Philip, as you used to do; and then perhaps I shall forget, or think it's nothing but a dream, the wearisome eight years since you and I played together as children on this very spot. Oh, how well I remember the very day and hour when I transplanted that little apple-pip; and how afraid you were lest I should injure it! yet, do you know, I thought even then not so much because you cared for it yourself, as because you saw how I was interested. Was I right?"

"I'm sure I don't remember about that, but I remember just where I found it, peeping up through two chips close under the wood pile, and how you called it Picciola, and promised to tell me a story about it, and never did; and how carefully you moved the chips, and sent me into the house for an old iron spoon to take it up with; and Aunt Rebecca wouldn't let me have it, and, after she was gone, Aunt Bethany gave me a new one and told me to keep it for my own, and then you set it out and watered it every evening."

"What, the spoon?"

"No, the pip; and cut notches in a stick to see how fast it grew."

"Oh yes, yes, I remember it all now," cried Philip, passionately kissing Mary's hand which he had stolen a moment before; "I didn't think I'd ever been so happy. More! tell me more!"

"Do you remember," continued Mary, gently disengaging her hand, and blushing, or else it was the moonlight,—"do you remember what you said when you went away?"

"No, what was it?"

"The last day you were here, you went out into the barn, and into the garden, and in fact everywhere to bid them all good-by; and at last we came to this tree. I was very sorry you were going away, and I should never see you again, for you know you used to be very good to me in those days, Philip; and so you told me I could come every

day and look at this tree, and I should know from that just how you were. As long as the tree grew straight and comely, you would be well and happy; but if any thing happened to it, or if it grew crooked or misshapen, then you were sick or unhappy."

"Yes," said Philip in a low voice; "and how was it?"

"It grew finely the first year," said Mary, "and most of the second; and then it began to droop and bend over—there's the crook now, you see; I did all I could to make it straight, but it grew worse and worse every year; a cow got into the garden and ate off the top; and at last it grew so ugly that I could hardly bear the sight of it, for I couldn't help thinking of you as being in the same sort; but the tree slandered you most cruelly, didn't it?"

"I wish I could think so; but, crooked and misshapen as it is, I have no right to reproach it. It is full of vigor and luxuriance, gone astray perhaps for want of a directing hand, but it has grown its very best. If I were to be here another year I would have it pruned and grafted. That's easily done; but who shall prune and graft the passions of the human heart?"

"I suppose we must do that ourselves."

"Yes; you might as well bid that tree put a knife to its own branches, or tell it to bear pippins instead of those sour bitter crabs. But, tell me, Mary, how have you got along? Does life seem as bright to you now as it did then? Haven't you sometimes felt tired of this stupid little village?"

"I am sorry to say that most of the time I have been very happy. Totemwell may seem to you little and stupid, and I dare say it is; but it probably suits me all the better for that very reason. But lately, within a year or two, thanks to Dr. Edgerly, or my own improved capacity, I have begun to take more enlarged views of life in general, and my little portion of it in particular, and I've been unhappy once or twice as anybody. I really begin to feel sometimes as if Totemwell were not big enough for me, and as if there were something I must have before I could be satisfied. It's very grand; but after all, I don't seem to myself to have gained a great deal."

"Gained!—no, indeed; every step in that direction is total loss; but what has Dr. Edgerly to do with it? why should he intrude into your Paradise with his sad fruit of

knowledge? and what has such a man as he to do with talking about unhappiness? Hasn't he a wife and children?"

"Perhaps he thinks that the more reason: he always says a family man is like a small army in a great fort. But, after all, it's only talk; he's really one of the happiest, most cheerful men I know of; and the happier he is, the more he loves to talk about misery. That's the way his happiness shows itself."

"Misery! what a world this is! where we have only a taste of happiness, and no one gets a full meal; so that it turns sour in our mouth; where we are afraid to be rich for fear of poverty, afraid to be happy for fear of suffering, afraid even to live for fear of death. A little happiness, and a little life, is worse than none; it is easier to be happy a thousand years, than a single day. If we have only a single orange, how anxious we are to suck it dry and not lose a single drop, and eat even the bitter peel; but in a whole orchard! I have spent many a wretched hour when I have felt I could be perfectly happy, if the shortness of life had not made me niggardly of every moment, so as to get its full worth of pleasure, just as a little boy will turn over his penny a hundred times at the shop window, between a stick of candy and a roundout. I used to be glad, I know, when my penny was gone."

"But there is another life."

"I know, if we can wait for it; but I want mine now. Besides, I can't bear change; I don't like to go from one city to another; and how will it be when a change of worlds? And I don't wish to be any happier than I could be here; I don't wish to live where they neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor where our love will be cold moonshine diluted. I would rather concentrate it, as in a burning glass, so that there may be some heat in it."

"What! to scorch and burn those we love?"

"To be sure; in the smart and tingle is half the pleasure; how else could one know that he was loved? but, I understand you've been to New York; that must have given your mind a start."

"Yes; I've been wishing you would come to that; we met one of your friends there—Mr. Mason."

"Did he say he was my friend? he has done more to

injure me than any other man living; but how did you like him?"

"He was very pleasant while he stayed, though he went away rather abruptly, and without saying a word to anybody. But what a striking resemblance there is between him and you; we all noticed it, Dr. Edgerly as well as Aunt Bethany. I should certainly have thought that you were Mr. Mason, if I had met you anywhere else, or if you had come into the room without first sending in your name. But, I can see your hair is darker, and you are rather taller, and you don't look quite so old. He said then he didn't believe we could tell you apart; but I knew I could, though I had some doubts about Dr. Edgerly. But have you seen him since?"

"Yes, I saw him in New York last week."

"Did you? and did he say any thing about us? did he tell you what—what we talked about?"

"I heard him say that he had seen you, and that was about all; indeed he always seemed very shy and reserved, and disposed to say as little as he could on the subject; but what makes you so interested in him?"

"Why, you know, we are naturally interested in those we have seen."

"But you don't seem particularly interested in the other boarders of Mrs. Harris."

"I didn't suppose you knew them."

"Oh, yes, I do; I stopped there once a short time myself."

"Well, how are Nancy and Mr. Dickey?"

"They are very well."

"Not married yet?"

"No."

"How is Mr. —— I forget his name?"

"Mr. Binks?"

"Oh yes, Mr. Binks."

"He is very well too, and looking round like a fish as hard as ever; but, it seems to me your questions don't flow very fast; you have asked me more in one minute about Mr. Mason than I believe you'd ask in a week about all the rest in the house. Such partiality is inexcusable."

"Why, you know, we can't be equally interested in all."

"You confess, then, you are interested in Mr. Mason."

"Why, yes, if you call it a confession; I suppose I am a little interested."

"Only a little? then, the others must be very badly off, indeed; but why should you have been interested in him at all? I'm sure he's a very ordinary fellow."

"Ordinary? and fellow? but, I know you are only saying so to tease me, just as you used to."

"Did I? I had forgot all about it; but tell me really, didn't you find Mr. Mason very tiresome, sort of humdrum? he's so very quiet, you know, and hardly ever says anything."

"I don't know what you mean by not saying anything. I'm sure he talked fast enough when he was with me; you should have seen how his eyes sparkled,—just like a coal, when you blow it."

"Oh, yes, I dare say; it must be a dead coal that *you* couldn't blow bright; but, when he was with others, did he seem so lively and agreeable then?"

"No, I don't think he did; but you wouldn't have him talking all the time?"

"No, indeed, not I; I wouldn't have him talk at all, unless to better purpose."

"I declare, what heartless creatures you men are! I should rather not have a friend if she talked of me as you have of Mr. Mason. First, you blame him for talking so little, and then you wish he wouldn't talk at all; I shan't believe you love him one bit."

"Perhaps you are right; but, at all events, I love him quite as well as I do myself; and, as the world goes, that is about as much as one can expect. I wouldn't spare my own faults, why should I his?"

"Because he's not here to defend himself, you know; you wouldn't speak ill of yourself behind your back."

"I don't know about that;" replied Philip with a laugh, expressing a great deal of inward satisfaction; "it's not quite so impossible as you imagine; and I would slander myself most foully for the sake of hearing myself defended so faithfully as you have done Mr. Mason. If he were here to listen, I'm sure he would consider himself highly obliged

to me; and when you and I are a little better acquainted, I shall be delighted to bring all my faults up to judgment if you will only promise to plead my case with half as much enthusiasm. With such an advocate, even vice and stupidity would lose their ugliness, and I should have no fears but you could talk me into love with myself. Oh! I wish you would try."

"But you are going away so soon there won't be time."

"Who told you I was going away?"

"You said so yourself last evening; you had business of great importance that wouldn't allow you to stay a single day."

"Did I? well, I have business now of far greater importance that will not allow me to go away these two weeks. If I were heir to a crown, to-morrow only, I would not stir a step. So don't let's talk of going. It's an ugly word; I'd never do any thing but stay, if I could help it."

"Well, if you are going to be here so long, why don't you come and stay here instead of over at that stupid tavern? Aunt Bethany would be delighted to have you; she has done nothing but talk about it ever since you came; how strange it was that you hadn't come here the very first thing, just as if it had been your home. It would really make her very happy to have you come, and stay just as long as you please."

"And how would it affect the rest of the family?"

"Well, the cat would be equally delighted; she is always glad to see company, and, besides, I really believe she remembers you; and, as for me, I always make it a point to be pleased with every thing the rest are."

"That is to say, you consent for the sake of peace and harmony; but, if you had your way about it, you'd full as lief I'd stay where I am. In that case I won't come."

"Before you make up your mind, you had better hear what Aunt Bethany has to say about it."

"I know that already; I want to hear what you have to say about it."

"And that's just nothing at all; it's her house, not mine."

"But, for all that, you know whether my coming would make you glad or sorry."

"Well, then, it would make me glad, if that will satisfy

you; though I am doubtful whether I ought to have said even so much."

"How afraid you women are of giving a little pleasure, or rather a great pleasure at little cost, and you do it so grudgingly."

"I hardly think I deserve that, after saying so much to please you; but I see you are the same as ever."

"You are sorry, then, that I have not changed; I am sorry too since it vexes you."

"I never said it vexed me."

"No, but thought so."

"No, nor thought so either; but, here's Aunt Bethany fast asleep. Well, have you had a good nap?"

"Why, no child! I haven't been asleep! I never sleep, you know, in the day-time; I was thinking, that's all. But how did you find the garden, Mr. Hastings? does it look as it used to?"

"It looks much the same as when I went away, only a great deal smaller; but I can't tell you how much I enjoy this visit. The commonest object seems almost sacred to me, and I feel all the while as if treading on consecrated ground. I must have been the happiest child that ever lived, for there is nothing that doesn't remind me of some happy hour. It seems to me that Eve could hardly have looked back to Paradise with more despairing longing than I to those early days now whirled away into empty space, further than ever comet from the sun—and they come back no more."

"Ah! you must come and see it in the daytime," cried Aunt Bethany, who had heard only a few words of this speech, it being intended simply for Mary's ear; "you can't tell nothing how it looks by night; there's more flowers now a good deal, since sister Rebecca died; they seem to have sprung up all at once. I wonder what the reason was we never could make 'em grow before."

Oh, delightful simplicity of Aunt Bethany! who couldn't or wouldn't remember that the only reason why flowers didn't grow in the days of Aunt Rebecca was because she wouldn't let them; and that the few there were came up and grew by stealth, being kept by Mary in a distant and retired part of the garden, and there secretly visited and watered much in the same way as the old prophets and covenanters

were nourished in caves and desert places by the love and devotion of their followers. This was the only instance of deception of which Mary had ever been guilty, and being justified as it was by the connivance of Aunt Bethany, and the almost sacred nature of its object, I hope it will not be regarded as a serious blemish in her moral character. Aunt Rebecca, indeed, was not so much deceived as the two confederates supposed, for, going one day to drive out a cow who had got into the garden, she came very unexpectedly upon the strip of border where the little band of fugitives, which had so long owed their safety to Mary's care, had taken refuge.

If Aunt Rebecca had been ten years younger, that moment had been their last; but, fortunately, this event occurred at that time when, as already mentioned, the sluggishness of age had begun to abate her natural pugnacity. In the first ebullition of passion at finding her authority thus contemned, she seized by the nape of the neck an unresisting heart's-ease, pulled it from its bed, and dashed it down upon the gravelly path. While the rest stood quaking in their shoes, expecting nothing less than the same fate, and the cow, gravely whisking her tail, looked on in sympathy, yet pleased at finding Aunt Rebecca's wrath diverted to another object; she suddenly paused, looked up and down the garden to be sure that no one was in sight, then tenderly raising the fallen heart's-ease, she replaced it in its former position, and did her best to efface all traces of the violence she had just committed.

Then, having finished driving out the cow, which demanded quite as skillful generalship as for Wellington to drive the French out of Spain, and as many blows as to drive a nail into an oak plank, though the nail goes tail first, which the cow did not—she walked majestically into the house, washed her hands, and sat down to her work, in a strange state of angry complacency; for she thought that she had just exhibited a wonderful proof of tenderness and forbearance, and was half vexed with herself for it, though she need have felt no compunctious visitings on that score, since it was really nothing in the world but the cold heart of age and the feeble, cowardly temper it engenders.

So have I seen a doughty pedagogue who, in the first

years of his reign, used to flog ten or twelve a day, and think no more of it either than Hotspur of the unlucky Scots, on whom he had whetted his sword and appetite for breakfast, gradually taper off till he was satisfied with one a quarter; and then, forsooth, he calls it clemency, and enlarged views of human nature, and amended discipline, and moral suasion, Heaven bless the mark! turning philanthropist and philosopher in his old age, like a lion who has lost his teeth, or a tabby cat who, from age and other infirmity, finds it pleasanter to sit dozing in the chimney corner than to pursue her wonted game through garret and cellar.

But, to return to our story: Mary never suspected the danger her favorites had escaped so narrowly, and, in process of time, as Aunt Rebecca's vigilance still more relaxed, she even ventured to set out a slip of honeysuckle, and sow some mignonnette under her window; and, though Aunt Rebecca's soul was secretly vexed within her at Mary's obduracy, she winked hard upon it with both eyes, and, indeed, never seemed to know that there was any honeysuckle there. When, in the early summer the south wind blew softly, filling the house with the fragrance of the clustering flowers, the rustling of the leaves, and the grateful murmur of the bees allured thither by those luscious sweets, when the fond and trusting honeysuckle, longing for a return of its affection, and peeping in at the window, did its best, by sight, and sound, and smell, to awaken the sympathy of its gentle mistress, Aunt Rebecca would exclaim, "How sweet the clover blossoms smell! or the new made hay!" Mary and Aunt Bethany would assent, as if it were the most natural thing in the world; and thus, by this ruthless proscription the poor vine, while flaunting so gaily, and even wantoning in its luxuriance, seemed to lose its entity, and to become a mere abstraction, more unsubstantial even than the fleeting wind, or the shifting random work of light and shade it wrought upon the chamber floor.

"No," said Philip, "I remember there was little sympathy between flowers and Aunt Rebecca; and I always thought the reason was, because they are so fond of colors. If they had only drest in black bombazine, she would have liked them well enough; but I must bid you good night, it's past ten o'clock."

"How long are you going to stay in Totemwell?" asked Aunt Bethany.

"Not less than one week, and, probably, not more than four."

"Are you? I want to know! Then, why can't you come and stay here? We should be ever so glad to have you."

"Really and truly?"

"To be sure; and what's more, I should be real angry if you didn't; I should think 'twas because you didn't care for us."

"Very well; I'll come to-morrow, and we'll see who gets tired first. Good night."

CHAPTER XXVII.

BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS.

Philip came the next morning, according to his promise, and then Aunt Bethany, with an air of triumph, led him up stairs to the best chamber, or minister's chamber, as it was oftener called, because hitherto reserved exclusively for that privileged class, who, in their frequent visits to Totemwell, to supply the pulpit during the interregnum that followed the decease of good old parson Bennett, had always, to the mutual satisfaction of themselves and Aunt Rebecca, been quartered upon her hospitality. The young man who advertised for board in a family, where his religious example would be considered sufficient compensation, would have had no difficulty, if he had only been a minister, in striking a bargain with Aunt Rebecca, so devoted a worshipper was she of the whole class, and so highly did she prize the benefit that would thus accrue to her household.

Into this chamber Aunt Bethany, who, on this point, fully shared her sister's enthusiasm, now conducted Philip; for, if not a minister, he was a minister's son, and would, probably, preach himself before long, and had a right, if any body had, to the very best the house afforded. The very air of this chamber was different from any other. It seemed thicker and

—"denser,
Perfumed by an unseen censer,"

as if the prayers that had there been offered had left a part of their own blessed influences. The room was like a church in its air of sacredness and solemnity, and the thick curtains, muffling the light; it was like a church, too, in the sense of loneliness and desolation it awakened, and Philip rather hastily drew back into the outer air.

"No," said he, "I feel that I am not good enough yet to enter heaven; my old, little chamber, over the porch, will suit me far better; there, perhaps, I shall dream over

again some of the dreams of my boyhood; and, if I do, that will be heaven enough for me."

Aunt Bethany did all she could to combat this resolution, which was so entirely at variance with her own ideas of the respect due to her distinguished visitor; but, finding him impracticable, she at length yielded, and the third night saw him once more installed in the little room, hardly bigger than a closet, where, years before, he had so often kicked off his shoes and stockings, and would now, but for the gleam of hope that began to dawn on his soul, gladly with them have thrown off his very being.

The next day they all went to take tea and spend the evening with Doctor Edgerly.

"Now, doctor," cried Mary, after they were seated at table, "did you ever see such a likeness as between Mr. Mason and Mr. Hastings?"

"Well, I don't see the likeness; Mr. Hastings's hair and eyes are both a good deal lighter than Mr. Mason's; he is shorter, and doesn't seem so old by at least two years. I should have noticed the resemblance, certainly, but it's by no means so striking as I had expected to find it, after what Mr. Mason told us. Did you say you had ever been mistaken for each other?"

"Oh, yes; quite often."

"Well, it only shows how careless and unobservant most persons are in such matters; now, I never should have mistaken you, under any circumstances whatever."

After supper Mrs. Edgerly played and sang. Mary and the doctor accompanied her; but Philip declared he could not sing a note, though he was the best listener in the world. But his eyes were not idle.

"Oh," thought he, "she is a glorious creature, such as I have seen in dreams, but hardly hoped to realize; so fair—so soft—so gentle—so spirited—so formed for love—so incomplete without it! a vine to cling; a dove to nestle! so simple—so ignorant! nothing hard—nothing strong-minded! calm, deep, serene as a mountain lake, stirred, perhaps, now and then, by the gusty winds of sorrow and temptation, but quickly at rest again; and not, like the ocean of man's heart, for ever restlessly heaving with its own surging passions! If she is once mine—mine! I am not worthy of her—nothing

more in this world will I ask; I shall then have a purpose in life, for which I have been so long seeking, a motive and an end for exertion. I shall then first begin to live. But if not—then—then my fate is sealed. I will flee from society; I will seek out some profound and distant solitude, where I shall no longer be vexed and tormented by seeing a happiness I cannot share, and where disappointed pride, and love, and ambition will no longer expose me to the pity and contempt of the world."

For several days after this, Mary and Philip were almost constantly together. The drives around Totemwell were hardly to be surpassed for beauty and variety. Philip, though his senses were dull, was a passionate lover of nature—he felt far more than he saw; Mary furnished him with eyes, and he supplied her with the interpretation. She looked upon the landscape as a beautiful picture; to him it had the brighter, but more indistinct coloring of a dream. Neither could have enjoyed it half so much without the other.

Then there were long and pleasant strolls by the banks of the soft flowing Trebec, whose little waves, as they danced thoughtlessly along, seemed always in the very ecstacy of love; and there were visits to be made among the neighbors, most of whom had often welcomed Philip when a boy, and now extended to him a more shame-faced, but not less cheerful hospitality. Sometimes they went a blue-berrying, or raspberrying, with reservoir tin pail, and tributary dipper, as in days of yore; and then they sat down and talked and laughed among the bushes, like children just let loose from school, or those grown up children, Adam and Eve in Paradise. Oh! it was a sight worth going a thousand miles to see! an hour of happiness worth going ten thousand miles to enjoy! no Arcadia was ever half so fair!

There were plenty of things to talk about, for they were never weary of recalling the events of their childhood, of asking each other if they remembered this or that; and it was hard to tell which pleased them most, the remembering or the forgetting.

"What! don't you remember that?" Philip would say; and then he would go on, adding one particular and another; Mary's eye and memory brightened all the while, till

at last the fog suddenly lifted, and she would exclaim, "Oh yes! I remember it all now! strange I did not think of it before!" With every memory thus raked like chestnuts from the ashes, their hearts seemed to grow warmer, as if they had found a new reason for loving one another; a new tie to bind their lives in one. Then suddenly, for they were too happy to talk by rule, they would leave those early days only to return to them again with fresh interest, while they related what had befallen them during their long separation—the struggles, the joys, the hopes, the fears of that changeful period. With Mary's history the reader is already familiar; Philip's I am compelled to leave, at present at least, to his imagination.

But graver subjects sometimes occupied their attention. Philip, who had never yet found one in whom he dared confide, who had been kept by pride, by a morbid sensibility, and by fear of ridicule, from communicating his thoughts and emotions to any human being, now poured them all out at once in Mary's startled ear, feeling sure that she at least would show nothing but pity for his errors, and forbearance, if not sympathy, for all his extravagant and wayward fancies.

"Oh, Mary!" he exclaimed, on one of these occasions, after she had been giving him an account of Aunt Rebecca's death, "you can't think how much I would give for your simple childlike faith, or even for the bigoted superstitious belief of Aunt Rebecca. You don't know, you never can know what I have suffered from doubt, from not knowing what to believe."

"What about?" said Mary.

"Well, about the particular doctrines of our church. I don't have much trouble with the great truths of religion; I believe in a general way that there is a God, and that he is the moral as well as natural governor of the universe, and that we are bound to love him; but when it comes to the divinity of Christ, the doctrines of election, of everlasting punishment, and the supernatural nature of regeneration, I confess I am completely set adrift, and know not which way to turn."

"Why!" replied Mary, greatly shocked at this disclosure, "I didn't suppose it possible for you, of all others, to

have any doubt on those subjects, after such an education, and being so long a member of the church."

"That is the very secret of the difficulty; these doctrines were forced upon me before I was old enough to receive them, and I joined the church before I was able fully to comprehend what it meant; or what was the nature of the change required. It is the easiest thing in the world to be so deceived. But after I grew older, and began to think for myself, my mind refused any longer to assent to those doctrines; and on looking into my own heart, I was unable to find there any change that demanded a supernatural explanation. If I was really any better than before, or any different from others, it was easily accounted for on natural causes, without having recourse to what seemed to me unsupported either by reason or observation. For when I came to extend my inquiries, and to examine the conduct of other professing christians around me, I could not find one who afforded any sufficient proof of a doctrine beset in itself with so many difficulties. There was the same pride, the same selfishness, the same ambition, the same striving after money, the same fondness after pleasure, the same acts of dishonesty and meanness; and if there was here and there an apparent exception, it was sure to be some one, such as a minister or old woman, who was incapacitated either by age or social position from mingling any longer in the great whirl of worldly passion. The most devoted of them all were far outdone by Hindoo fanatics, and I could, without the least injustice, ascribe every thing in which they differed from the world to education, to habit, to profession, and to a regard for reputation. I have known men who made no profession distinguished for every virtue, and I have known church members whom no one would ever have suspected to be such from any thing discoverable in their lives. Why, then, I say, should I believe a doctrine which if interpreted in its full vigor, will not only sentence to inconceivable and endless misery nine-tenths of the human race, and even many of those who profess it, but is also calculated to bring the character of God into dishonor, as first permitting the existence of evil, and then punishing his creatures,—creatures not of their own will, but his—for doing what they can't help doing, and for yielding to passions he has himself implanted in their bosoms? I'm sure I couldn't sentence my

worst enemy to such a punishment; and I should be sorry to believe that God is less merciful than I. Yet this is the doctrine in which I have been educated, and which for years has made this world little better than a prison-house, and the thought of the next infinitely dreadful, so that I wish one moment I had never been born, and the next that death were annihilation."

As Mary listened to these words, so new to her and strange, and uttered in the deepest tones of passion, she shuddered and drew back as from the mouth of a dreadful pit that had suddenly opened at her feet. Her spirit was swayed by his, as a reed is shaken by the wind; the strength of sympathy between them was almost too much for her; but still she held fast her integrity, and when the storm had overblown, she still raised her head calm and undismayed.

"I don't wonder you wish so," she replied, while Philip bowed his head in his hands; "I am sure I should wish so too if I were ever left to have such dreadful doubts even for a single hour."

"And why are you not?" cried Philip, lifting his head upon her, "why is not everyone? what reasons can you give for your faith?"

"I haven't any, I don't wish for any, none at least that would satisfy you. It is enough for me to know that the sun shines because I feel its warmth. My heart tells me I am right, and no learning or talents can ever make me believe I'm wrong."

"But that is a proof that is of no use to anybody but yourself."

"Perhaps so; but every one can have the same witness in his heart if he really wishes it, and will only take the trouble. I remember Mr. Bennett used to say that most men were too lazy to be Christians; they wouldn't take the trouble; they seemed all the while trying to see how little they could possibly do, like an unfaithful servant. But he thought it took as much time, and study, and labor, to become an eminent and successful Christian, as to become an eminent and successful merchant, or scholar; and that means were just as necessary in one case as in the other. But I never could do any thing at arguing, for I've never felt the need of it myself; so I will just read to you one or two

passages in a very old book Mrs. Edgerly lent me. It used to belong to her father, and he has marked them himself. They are about this very question, and though they don't make it a bit clearer to me they may perhaps to you.

"'Many do cry out at the sins of professing Christians, as though there were no hypocrisy out of the church, or as though there were no grace because they cannot see it. But because the eye can distinguish no color in a drop of water, hath the sea no color? or because there is no color in a room full of air, hath the sky no color? so, though the christian virtues may show poor and weak in a single believer, yet is Christianity gracious still. The heaven of Christ's love, there is the deepest blue.

"'But as to this question' (he is speaking now of everlasting punishment) 'it doth not concern you to make too nice enquiry. Those are poor and mean thoughts that that man hath of God, who cannot serve him but from fear of punishments; and who is ever asking, not how can I get rid of sin, but how can I keep my sin and escape the penalty? The true penitent doth not busy himself to cast up and compute the duration of the punishment denounced against his offenses, whether it be one day or a thousand years; his eyes are fixed upon the cross, and there he suffers his punishment beforehand; and he is more affected by the grace of Calvary than the thunders of Sinai. Finally, brethren, it is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness, and with the heart that confession is made unto salvation: and I would rather convince your hearts than your understandings; for, though feeling without knowledge may savor of superstition, yet knowledge without feeling is practical atheism. If any man ask, then, how he may obtain faith, I answer, let him first begin to love, for love is not only the fulfilling but the understanding of the law, and the sin of unbelief doth not precede but follow declension in holiness.'"

"And do you believe all this?"

"Certainly I do, and a great deal more; and I believe it so heartily that if all the church members in the world were as bad as they could be, or, what seems to me much worse, if they were all as good as Mr. Bennett, and should come to me and say, 'It is all a lie, there is no truth in it,' I should believe it just the same."

"And what would you say to them?"

"I would say only this, 'What shall separate us from the love of Christ?'"

"And have you always felt so?"

"No, I can remember when it was very different."

"Didn't you doubt then?"

"No, I was simply indifferent."

"And what has made the change—yourself, or another? that is, is it such as you could have attained by your own unaided efforts, or is it supernatural? and is it real, or only imaginary? did it come upon you in a moment, or was it the work of years?"

"It is real so far as this, that I love what I once hated, and hate what I once loved; it is supernatural so far as this, that I couldn't have done it myself; as to the time, I know no more than I know when winter changes into summer—yet in July I know that it is summer, as in January I had no doubt that it was winter."

"And is it summer now with you?"

"No, no more than early spring, and hardly that; the Christian summer, you know, dear Philip, blossoms only in heaven."

"I am afraid it will never bloom for me; but if any thing can make me believe, it is the sight of the calm, trusting, fearless love with which you embrace those doctrines that seem to me so gloomy and repulsive; for my sake, then, as well as your own, pray that no shadow of doubt may ever cross your path."

This conversation left a very painful impression upon the mind of Mary, the nature of which, however, she was not able fully to determine. She attributed it entirely to her zeal for religion, and the concern she felt for Philip's welfare; and, doubtless, both these feelings had much to do with it; but she was greatly deceived in supposing that they were the only, or even the principal, cause of her distress. Educated as she had been, it would have seemed to her utterly impossible to marry a man who was destitute of vital piety, and whose views on those all-embracing questions were not in strict accordance with her own. She had hitherto taken it for granted that Philip was all she could ask in this respect, and on hearing that dreadful confession from his

own mouth, a gulf seemed to open between them, which nothing short of a radical change in his heart could fill up or bridge over. It was the cold shadow of this dreadful thought, for as yet the thought itself was not in sight (that maidenly modesty forbid), that now chilled the blood in her veins, and left a sense of anguish at her heart, such as she had never known before. Something, conscience or prudence, she knew not which, now urged her to suffer the growing intimacy between herself and Philip to go no further, and she accordingly resolved to treat him henceforth in such a way as effectually to check all his advances.

She kept this resolution faithfully for full three hours and a half, conning, meanwhile, certain short and pithy sentences that should serve as extinguishers to his ardor; but Philip coming in, very unfortunately, before she had quite learned her lesson, put her out so badly, that she quite forgot what she had to say, so that if he had chosen that moment to make a proposal, she would, certainly, have blundered into an acceptance, and said Yes, when she was all the while fully determined to say, No.

This failure, apparently, discouraged her from making any farther trial, and from that time she and Philip were more together than ever.

The gossips of the village whispered that they were engaged, or, if they were not, they ought to be, and, for their parts, they wondered how Aunt Bethany could let them act as they did; if Aunt Rebecca had been alive, things would have been managed after a very different fashion. But of all this Philip was totally unconscious; and if he had known every word that was spoken, it would not have altered his conduct in the smallest particular, unless, perhaps, to induce him to assert his independence in some manner still more glaring and offensive. His senses, however, were now so completely drenched in love, that the envy and jealousy of the numerous class who, without ever having spoken to Mary, yet considered him their rival, were entirely lost upon him, and even the frowning looks that Deacon Redwood cast towards Aunt Bethany's pew, the first Sunday Philip and Mary were at church together, had no more effect than cannon balls on cotton bags.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HISTORY OF A DAY.

SINCE the last conversation recorded between Peter and his father, they had had no further intercourse on the subject. This was not because it no longer occupied their thoughts, but because each mistrusted the other, and felt inclined to manage matters his own way. After what had so recently occurred, the deacon felt more than ever the danger of admitting Peter to his counsels, and the latter, on the other hand, disgusted with his father's caution, was now meditating a far more speedy and decisive course of action.

Early one morning, before Philip or Aunt Bethany was yet stirring, Mary was busy in the kitchen, superintending and aiding in the preparation of the breakfast, about which she was now more than usually solicitous, when she was surprised by Deacon Redwood's coming softly in at the back door, with a tin pail in his hand, to borrow, as he said, a quart of milk.

"Sally has just gone out to milk the cow," said Mary, "and if you will leave your pail, I will send her over with it when she comes in."

"Oh, no," said the deacon, "I'd just as lief wait; and, besides, I've been wanting to see you alone this sometime, for I have a few words to say to you, that I'd rather not say to anybody else. You are, perhaps, aware," he continued, with an air of so much friendliness and sincerity, that Mary began insensibly to lose her aversion towards him, "that ever since you first came into my family, I have been almost constantly at work endeavoring to discover your relations. I have never made much noise about it, it is true; it is not my way; and some have accused me of being indifferent, as if I had not taken sufficient pains, though they themselves would never lift a finger; but, however, I have done my

best, and, I am happy to say, my efforts have recently been crowned with success. I ought not to say that exactly, either, for after all, it's more owing to Peter than to me. I should have been discouraged long ago, if it hadn't been for him, and—yet why do I tell you of these things, when I know you are determined to hate him, and when the very act that most strongly proves his affection is so plausibly turned against him? I don't expect you to forgive him; I hardly expect you even to believe me; but I feel, nevertheless, that justice requires you should know the whole truth in regard to that unhappy affair.

"At the time of his engagement to Miss Harris—for he has since, with deepest shame and penitence, confessed to me that he had been guilty of that imprudence—he had, as I understand, the strongest reason to believe that you were attached to this Mr. Mason. It was, indeed, commonly reported through the house that you were engaged, and it was this, added to your former coldness and indifference, that led him, in a moment of passion and excitement, to take a step that he regretted as soon as it was over, and which he now looks upon as the greatest folly of his whole life. I assure you I didn't come here with any intention of alluding to so painful a subject, or of, in any way, pleading my son's cause; but tell me, my dear Mary, do you consider yourself entirely without blame in this matter? Were you not in thought, at least, if not in act, unfaithful to him before he was unfaithful to you? Has he not, for months, given you every proof of love and devotion? and can you now, without injustice, suffer a single hasty act to outweigh it all? Is it too late to hope for a reconciliation between you?"

"Yes," replied Mary, "it is too late. I may have been unjust to Peter; if I have, may God forgive me; I cannot expect it of him. But he has no right to accuse me of coldness or indifference, for he knows I never pretended any thing else. He had all he could expect."

"Well," said the deacon, with a deep sigh, "let it all go; he has the happiness of knowing that he has loved you; if you cannot love him, why, there is no help for it."

"No," replied Mary, "I can never love him, at least in

the way you would wish; but I shall be always glad to hear of his happiness."

"Are you in earnest?" cried the deacon; "do you really continue to cherish such kindly feelings towards him? Well, I assure you, nothing could give me greater satisfaction, or go farther towards mitigating the poor boy's disappointment. But, suppose you and I plan out for him a pleasant surprise. I have already told you how I had, at last, succeeded in discovering your relations. I haven't time now to tell you how; but this much you can know: your father was very wealthy, and the property he left behind him has accumulated, till it is worth, probably, some three hundred thousand dollars."

"Is my father really dead, then?"

"Yes; he died some five years ago."

"And what was his name?"

"Regnal."

"But his other name, I mean,—his surname?"

"Why, the same as yours, of course; how could it be any thing else?"

"Yes; but I wasn't sure what mine was."

"Yes, I know all about it," said the deacon, laughing; "very curious it was, too, we should have thought so many years your name was Wallace, when all the time it was Daventry. Dr. Edgerly was right about that advertisement; it was intended for you and your mother, and was published nearly six years ago, soon after your father's return from South America, and there it had been lying in my house, only so much waste paper; it was that first set me agoing; until I saw that, I had really thought very little about your relations, one way or the other."

"And have I any other relations?"

"None that I know of, except an uncle, N. Butler Daventry, who lives somewhere in New York. I thought, perhaps, you might have seen him while you were there."

"No, I did not; at least, not to my knowledge; but tell me all about him; what sort of a man is he?"

"About that I know, at present, very little. I have seen him only once. He is a very handsome man, proud and worldly, with a high sense of his social position, and would probably be slow to acknowledge your claims upon him,

without the most satisfactory proofs. But, fortunately, there will be nothing wanting to make the whole perfectly clear, when he will at once place the property in your hands. It has cost me, to be sure, a great deal of trouble, and will, probably, cost me a great deal more; but, if it were ten times as much, I would most cheerfully do it all for your sake. I must confess, however, I have been tried by the misconstructions put upon my conduct by those who should have known better, and, especially, by the conduct of one whom I will not name, but whose influence over you has already, more than once, been exerted to my prejudice. I am bound to hope that he, at least, believes what he so confidently asserts, though Christian charity would, perhaps, have suggested a somewhat different course."

"But what I was coming to was this; I don't pretend to be entirely disinterested, in fact I believe I am growing downright selfish and avaricious; but perhaps you'd like to make Peter a present, a mere trifle or so, by way of showing your kind feelings; it would give him so much pleasure, and I should feel then abundantly repaid for all I have done; though I may as well tell you honestly, that if I had been disposed to make it a matter of trade or speculation, I shouldn't have let you off half so easy. Some, I know, wouldn't have been satisfied with less than half your whole estate. But I have no such intention. I shall proceed at once to put you in possession of this property, and whatever you then choose to bestow upon Peter, will be regarded purely as a gift."

"How much did you say it was?"

"It must be somewhere in the neighborhood of three hundred thousand."

"Why! I can hardly believe you! it seems all like a dream; three hundred thousand dollars! what can I do with so much money? I shall be delighted to give Peter a part; but I must first see Dr. Edgerly, and talk with him about it, and then I shall know better what to do."

"Why do you wish to consult him? I should suppose by this time, you were old enough to think and act for yourself. Mrs. Edgerly told my wife the other day, very uncharitably I thought, and I blamed my wife for listening to her, that you couldn't buy a piece of ribbon without first con-

sulting her husband; and I have no doubt she is in the habit of making similar remarks elsewhere. They're good people too, both of them, but apt to be imprudent. And besides, I can tell you beforehand, that Peter will never consent to receive a dollar if it is known to any one besides us three. I am not by any means sure that he will at all; but he certainly would not, if it were to be spread over the whole village."

"Very well," replied Mary; "if that's the way they talk, I will see if I can't for once act for myself, and I should love dearly to surprise them too. Well, let me see, do you think fifty thousand would be enough for Peter?"

"Why! my dear Mary! you're not in earnest?"

"I shall want to give away a great deal, you know, to others; but if you think that is not enough"—

"Oh no, no indeed; I wasn't thinking of any such thing. I was only wondering if you could be so generous. Why, the poor fellow will cry his eyes out when he comes to hear it. But you mustn't—I can't let you rob yourself to such an extent. All he wants is just some little present to serve as a keepsake. He'll feel so ashamed of himself. If you can do this now, what wouldn't you have done if you had loved him? Poor fellow! I hardly know whether he is more to be envied or pitied."

"Oh, well," said Mary, "I trust he will live to see many happy days, and I am sure, I am very glad if I can do any thing to help him."

"Well, I don't know how to oppose you; but really!—such generosity, such nobleness of feeling, after he had injured you so deeply! But don't say any thing to Aunt Bethany. She's getting old, and then, as you say, it will be so pleasant to surprise them. But I must go now; I'll get every thing ready, and see you again to-morrow. If it is necessary to go to New York, I suppose you have no objection. Well, well—now let's see how well you can keep a secret. We'll show 'em that we can buy not only a ribbon, but a whole dress without their suspecting it."

Busy with this important secret, and highly elated at thought of the happiness she could confer with so much money, Mary for a time forgot the uneasiness that had been preying upon her, ever since Philip had made that fatal dis-

covery in regard to the unsettled state of his religious belief; but her thoughts were soon recalled to the painful subject, by a mental process I need not stay to describe, on his asking her immediately after breakfast, if she didn't think it would be a good day to take the drive they had been meditating to Crowell's Pond, a beautiful sheet of water that lay about five miles to the north of the village, and which had beeome so famous for the engagements plighted on its shores, that it had been for some time in contemplation to change its present homely title, into the more romantic and appropriate appellation of Cupid's Looking-glass.

Indeed, so great were the virtues ascribed to this fairy basin, that it was said, and by many of the village maidens confidently believed, that whoever drank together of its waters, or even walked once around its edge, would straightway conceive so violent a fondness for each other, though they might have been before entirely indifferent, as nothing could satisfy but immediate possession.

Mary thought of this idle legend, and would gladly have been excused from the proposed expedition; but neither Philip, nor her own heart would take any denial, and she at length reluctantly consented.

The little lake, for, small as it was, it seemed worthy of that title, lay in the midst of the hills, like a dewdrop in the lap of a rose, as round, as clear, as sparkling, and at first sight almost as evanescent. A transcendental poet might have called it the tear of Deity; you looked every moment to see it exhaled, kissed off, rather, by the wanton wind, or winked away by the surrounding hills. But when you stood upon its margin, or looked down into its crystal depths from the light skiff, scarce large enough for the Culprit Fay, and apparently as frail as an inverted bubble, when you saw that it was big enough for trout and pickerel to swim in; and when you caught the gleam of the bottom of pebbles and glittering sand, far far beneath, you changed your mind, and felt that it was as calm, as peaceful, and as unchangeable as the everlasting hills that had for so many thousand years made their toilet in its glassy mirror.

No house was near, no cultivated field came down to its borders; but the woods were there, the gray rocks, the short green turf, and the o'er-arching sky. Brimful was that lake

continually, fed by secret springs; and a little brook, issuing from its southern extremity, stole noiselessly away under the overhanging trees, to tell, wherever it went, by its clear waters and sparkling mirth, the story of its mountain home. Almost in its very center, but a little nearer the mouth of the brook, as if that gentle suction had drifted it so far, rose a tiny islet, high and steep, accessible only at a single point, and shaded only by a solitary elm, the American elm, that adds the softness of the weeping willow to the pride and glory of the oak.

Seated in that shade, screened by those rocks, the little shallop itself securely nestled in the mimic harbor at their feet, secure from all prying eyes or gaping ears, Philip and Mary drank such draughts of love, as would have drained the lakelet dry a thousand times. If ever I make love, may such a bower be mine!

But now, though the love was still there, the happiness was gone. Philip has risen from his recumbent position, and stands leaning with folded arms against the venerable elm, while Mary, sitting at his feet, plays cruelly with the little flower she has just plucked from among the mossy roots.

"Love me!" exclaimed Philip, "never; you know not what love means. What has theology to do with love? I should love you though you were a fiend, and you, you have refused me for this nothing—a mere difference of opinion. It can't be. Say you hate me, and have always hated me, and then I may believe you."

"I cannot say that," replied Mary, her voice trembling so that she could hardly speak, "for it would not be true; but it is not a small thing to me, it could not be a small thing, dear Philip, any thing that would make me do as I have done."

"Very well, let us say no more about it."

After this, nothing was said for several minutes. Then Philip roused himself, and skimming a pebble he had been holding in his hand, away into the lake; "Let us go," he said.

They descended the rocky path, and took their places in the boat in silence.

"If the boat would only sink!" thought Philip; and he pulled so hard, that he broke the right-hand oar, at which

Mary started, and turned a little pale. He noticed her fear, and a strange joy took possession of his heart.

"She is frightened; yes, but she has taken away my right to comfort her. Let her be frightened."

He helped her out of the boat, and into the wagon, arranged the harness with a deliberation that seemed to himself monstrous and gigantic, took his seat beside her, as he supposed, for the last time, and urged the horse to speed.

"Oh, don't drive so fast!" Mary would have said, again and again, but the words died on her lips. "Let him kill me, if he will; I love him still."

"She shall marry me or death; nobody else shall have her! Ah! if I could only see her lying cold and stiff and dead, yes dead, forever, past all waking, I should be happy, yes, damnably happy. Who ever thought before, that love was so much like hate? I love her with perfect hatred; I hate her with perfect love. I—but stop;" sudden as light, shone out again his old, tender affection. He checked the horse, he spoke gently to him, because he must speak gently to something, and could not speak to her; but she felt by some mysterious sympathy, that the current of his thoughts was changed.

Never, indeed, had he so loved her; and perhaps, if he had then spoken, a single word would have laid open all her heart. But the precious, irrecoverable moment passed away; and in the numbness of emotion that now fell upon him, like a gloomy November day, there was no place either for love or hate.

Aunt Bethany ate her dinner alone that day; for Philip came not back from the tavern, and Mary, under plea of a violent headache, had retired to her own chamber.

"But where is Mr. Hastings?" said the old lady.

"He has gone over to the tavern to leave his horse," replied Mary, "and will be here in a minute, I suppose; but I wouldn't wait for him, for I shouldn't wonder if he took his dinner over there."

"Take his dinner over there!" repeated Aunt Bethany, "why, what should he do that for? You and he haven't been quarrelling, I hope;" but, before she had done speaking, Mary was gone.

Several hours later, stealing softly into the front cham-

ber, she saw Philip just mounting a horse, and riding slowly down the street. He had evidently made up his mind to leave Totemwell as soon as possible, and instead of waiting for the stage, had chosen that mode of conveyance, preferring to spend the night at Stratton Four Corners, rather than remain any longer in a place now become so hateful to him.

He looked up as he passed the house, and Mary was shocked to see the change so short a time had wrought in his countenance. She longed to speak to him once more, to bid him good bye, to ask him to remain a few days longer. She even made an effort to open the window, but it did not move readily; and, yielding to this little obstacle, after she had already surmounted so much greater, in subduing her rebellious pride and all the other womanly feelings that arrayed themselves against such a step, she abandoned her purpose; and, after gazing with dry eyes till he was entirely out of sight, she hastened back into her own room, and surveyed her fate. Never before, not at his first parting, not even on that day, when stung by passion, she had made that fatal promise to Aunt Rebecca, had she felt so utterly desolate and wretched.

She made a great effort to go down to supper, in order to allay any suspicions that Aunt Bethany might have conceived, and she thought for a time that she had succeeded; but it was really nothing but the old lady's instinctive delicacy, that kept her from giving full utterance to her doubts and fears. She could not help, however, casting at her, now and then, a glance of sympathetic inquiry, and breaking out into sundry ejaculations, such as seemed to show that she already had a shrewd suspicion of the truth, till Mary, finding even this more than she could bear, and fearful every moment of being called upon to give the dreaded explanation, was glad to escape once more to the solitude of her own room.

She had hardly thrown herself, however, upon the bed, when she heard the door open below, and a female voice inquire for Mary Grant.

In such states of mind as Mary was now suffering, common events, instead of losing what little interest they before possessed, seem often invested with new importance; or rather we are at such times in constant expectation of the

arrival of some extraordinary accident that shall at once change the circuit of our emotions, and deliver us from that dreadful whirlpool around one fixed idea. The postman's knock, always so suggestive, then becomes as the knocking in Macbeth, we are eager, yet almost afraid, to open the door; a simple citizen, of no mark or likelihood whatever, is transformed by our longing imagination into the ambassador plenipotentiary of king or senate, come to invest us with a patent of nobility, or the command of armies, or to treat with us on questions which concern the fate of empires.

So Mary, hearing the simple and common inquiry above mentioned, thought, of course, it must be some great thing. She hurried into the entry, and leaning over the bannisters, listened eagerly for what was to follow.

"Is Mary at home?"

"Yes, she is."

"Well, won't you tell her that Susan Moody has just scalded herself dreadfully, and wants her to come up there right away, as quick as ever she can. I can't stop now, for I've got to go for the doctor, but here's a young man 'ill carry her up there in his wagon."

"Tell him I will be down directly," cried Mary. "Is that all? I thought to be sure 'twas something. Scalded herself! What is it to me? Poor dear Susy! how glad I am you'll never know how I feel!"

The man who sat waiting for her in the wagon before the door, was tall and stout; so much Mary could see as she took her seat beside him, but it was too dark to distinguish his features, and she was wondering who it could be, when the sound of his voice, speaking to his horse, at once discovered, to her great surprise, that her companion was no other than Peter Redwood.

"You didn't know who 'twas, I guess," said Peter, laughing, as he noticed Mary's sudden start.

"No," said Mary, "I supposed it was one of Mr. Moody's hired men; but tell me, how is Susan? is she much injured?"

"Not so bad but what I guess she'll get over it," said Peter; and he laughed again, this time in a manner that seemed to Mary peculiarly harsh and discordant.

"How did she do it?"

"I haven't heard exactly; but I believe she spilt some apple-sass onto her, a whole bilin' of it. Bad stuff, you know, that is to burn folks."

They presently reached the end of the village; but, instead of turning to the left into the road that led to Mrs. Moody's, Mary noticed with surprise that Peter kept straight on towards Stratton Four Corners.

"Why, where are you going?" she exclaimed; "this isn't the way to Mrs. Moody's."

"We can't get along that way," said Peter, "the bridge is up; so we shall have to go round by Sam Kenney's."

Mary felt secretly uneasy, she hardly knew why; but the truth was, Peter's manner struck her as being rather singular, and once or twice, when he turned towards her, she thought that she detected the smell of gin or brandy. They reached Sam Kenney's in safety; but, here again, instead of turning into the cross road, as he had promised, Peter still kept his horse's head in the same direction, and began to drive much faster than he had done before.

"Where are you going?" cried Mary, now seriously alarmed, "we have already passed the cross road, why don't you turn back?"

To this Peter made no other answer except to urge on his horse still more rapidly, till, having left Mr. Kenney's far behind, he suddenly put his arm round Mary's waist, exclaiming, as he forcibly drew her to his side, "Ah! that was a rich joke, pretty well done, I fancy. Never mind about Susy Moody, she'll do well enough. Now I think of it, 'twas only cold water she spilt on her, so she can't get much hurt;" and with this Peter laughed so loud, that it sounded in the dark silence of the woods almost unearthly.

"Let me go!" cried Mary, instantly comprehending the deceit that had been put upon her, and struggling violently to disengage herself; "let me out this instant! I won't ride with you a step farther!"

"No! no!" cried Peter, holding her, without difficulty, with one hand, while he plied both whip and reins with the other, "you don't get away so easily. I've been waiting to take a ride with you this long while, but that plaguy

Phil. Hastings is always and forever in the way; I'd like to break his head for him some time. But I've got you now, and if you get away from me again, you may take my head for a football, that's all."

"I'll jump out," said Mary, "if you don't stop this very minute."

"I'd like to see you do it," cried Peter, in a manner intended to be intensely facetious.

"I'll scream," said Mary, now firmly persuaded that Peter was grossly intoxicated, "and somebody will be sure to hear me."

"So do," replied Peter, "and I'll see who can scream loudest; come, begin, and I'll join in, or, perhaps, you'd like singing better; I vow I never felt so much like singing in my life.

'There was an old nigger and his name was Uncle Ned,
And he died long long time ago—
And he hadn't any',—

but why don't you join in, how in time do you suppose I'm going to sing alone?"

"How can you treat me so?" cried Mary, now bursting into tears of anger and alarm; "where are you carrying me?"

"Faith, and that's more than I know myself," replied Peter, the difficulties of his undertaking now first presenting themselves before him; "but you see, Mary, the fact is I love you most confoundedly, and I thought, perhaps, if we could only see each other alone a little while, we might somehow find ways to fix matters up mighty sudden, without troubling the old folks, and kind o' take 'em by surprise, you know. I'm tired, for my part, of going according to their say any longer; and so I just thought I'd chalk out a way of my own. Come, what do you say to taking a ride over to Four Corners? we can have the knot tied as slick as a whistle, stay there all night, and be back home to breakfast. Folks would stare some then, I guess. Come, what do you think about it?"

"I think," replied Mary, "that you are the very meanest, hatefulest, most cowardly man I ever saw; and I tell you again, to let me out this instant."

"Well, well," returned Peter, "I tell you there ain't no sort of use in being sulky about it, for marry me you've got

to, in some way or other, by fair means or foul, and that's the whole story; so you may as well make up your mind to it first as last."

"Never;" cried Mary, "I would sooner die a thousand times!" and at this moment, catching the sound of approaching wheels, she began to cry, "Help! help! murder! help!" in the most piercing tones; till Peter, stung almost to frenzy by hearing those ugly names sounded in his ears, as if by his own conscience, and exasperated at thought of losing his prize, and of the danger which he himself thereby incurred, forced her violently down into her seat, at the same time exclaiming, with a fearful malediction, "Hush up this instant! if you don't, I'll blow your brains out."

"Who's there?" cried the well-known voice of Dr. Edgerly; "what's the matter?"

"Oh, Dr. Edgerly! stop him! help! it's me," cried Mary; and the next moment Peter's horse sprang forward, the wheels just clearing the doctor's vehicle, and swept madly on into the darkening shadow of the woods.

Mary's heart died within her; but she offered up a short but fervent prayer to Heaven for safety, and thus felt her courage somewhat revived.

Listening long and earnestly, she thought that she heard behind them the distant sound of wheels, and she hoped that it was the doctor in pursuit; but, after all, perhaps it was only fancy, the beating of her own heart, or the hoarse murmer of the wind among the trees.

What if Dr. Edgerly had not heard her cry, or had failed to recognize her voice, and had, accordingly, gone slowly jogging home? Or, even supposing him to be upon their track, what hope was there that he could overtake them? His horse was so gaunt, so sleepy-looking, the laughing-stock of the village, while Peter's seemed brimful of life and spirit: it was madness to think of it.

Peter seemed to be of the same opinion; for, after riding about a mile at the same headlong pace, he gradually checked the speed of his horse, exclaiming as he did so, "Well done, Moll, you shall have a peck of oats for that, my beauty; it 'ill puzzle the doctor considerable to get his old bag o' bones to come up to the scratch in that fashion. It's no use, Mary, I tell you; there ain't a horse in all these

diggings that can hold a candle to my little sorrel. You see how she's streaking it now; well, she'll keep that up for at least two hours, give her only a moment to breathe, and not hurt her neither. No, no, Dr. Edgerly can't come in."

Surprised as he was, slowly driving home, with the reins, as usual, dangling against the horse's belly, by that sudden outcry, the doctor's powers were, for a moment, paralyzed, and he still sat, after Peter had passed, gazing stupidly into space.

But it was only for a moment; the next his horse and gig swung slowly round, and the long, straight line of road he had just traveled stretched dimly before him, walled on either hand by the unbroken forest, and, apparently, terminated at the farther end by the near horizon. At the same moment a dark object appeared in the opening, relieved against the sky; hung there for an instant, then plunged into the surrounding gloom.

Slowly, very slowly, it seemed to the doctor, old Nimrod gathered speed. Gaunt he was, indeed, and sleepy looking, ugly as a nightmare, stiff and sore as he whom the nightmare rides, and with little more to sustain him than the sad recollection of former triumphs. How could he hope to contend with his younger and more vigorous rival? Every moment must be increasing the interval between them, and every moment must increase the improbability of the pursuers overtaking the pursued.

But, somehow, the trees and fences are flying past with wonderful velocity, the spokes of the wheels form continuous circles, the gig bounds from side to side, cold shudders run rippling over the doctor's frame, his flesh creeps, he leans forward, hardly breathing, "Haaa, Nimrod! haaa!"

"Dr. Edgerly! doctor!" the cry is faint and feeble, as if spent with travel; but it reaches the doctor's ears, it reaches the ears of Nimrod, and still faster fly the trees, faster and faster whirr the wheels.

"Hush your noise, you cursed fool!" muttered Peter, between his teeth, "or I'll, pitch you out of the waggon. There he is now, I vow! but he won't catch me in a hurry, I can tell him. We know a trick worth two of that, don't we, Moll?" and, as he spoke, he drew forth a flask of brandy from his coat pocket, took a hasty draught; and then giving

his spirited horse the rein, and touching her lightly with the whip, she darted forwards at a speed that threatened to leave Nimrod far behind, and which might have given Nimrod's namesake, mighty hunter as he was, at least one new idea.

"Go it, Moll!" said Peter; "that's the way to tell the story!

'Oh, I'm going to run all night, I'm going to run all day;
I bets my money on the bob-tail nag; somebody'—

but thunder and guns! that horse must be the very devil; I don't see as I gain an inch, and yet Moll's doing her prettiest. 'Twould be a good joke, to be sure, to be beaten by that old carcass. I should never hear the last of it. Better stop, a good deal, and fight it out; I ain't a-going to be afraid of Dr. Edgerly, I know."

The two carriages were now not more than a hundred yards apart; and the sharp, quick trot of Peter's horse, and the fierce rattle of his wheels, contrasted plainly with the long swinging gait of the doctor's equipage; but which had the advantage it would have been hard to say.

Peter drove with the utmost care, and with the reins wound about his hands: he watched every turn in the road, every stone, and every hollow, and continually urged on his horse with his voice.

Dr. Edgerly held the reins convulsively in his grasp, as if he would shoot his own soul forward into the horse, but he made no attempt to guide his motions, nor to increase his speed, except, now and then, a long, low "Haaa, Nimrod," or "Haaa, boy," that sounded as if he was talking to himself.

Mary had sunk down on the bottom of the wagon, happily insensible to the dangers of that fearful ride, and now the only witnesses were the trees and stars. The latter had the best of it, for they could see from one end of the road to the other, while the trees, stretch their necks as they might, could catch only a passing glimpse. Bets ran high that night among the celestials, and much money, I am informed, changed hands on this occasion. Jupiter, as might have been expected, betted heavily on Peter; Venus, though unable, for a cause I dare not mention, to leave her chamber, was not ashamed to do the same; and, indeed, I

am sorry to say, there was hardly one but what followed their examples; from which I judged that those who live in high places are not necessarily distinguished for generosity or good morals.

For some time Peter had been too busy even to look behind him; and now, all at once, a head—a spectral head, almost, it seemed,—so vast, so monstrous, so unnatural, looked over his shoulder, and he felt its hot breath upon his cheek.

The effect of this sudden apparition was remarkable, and hard to be described. It was not yet an absolute defeat; for by keeping the middle of the road, Peter could prevent the doctor from passing him for a long time to come, and, perhaps, exhaust his endurance altogether. But Nimrod's innocent and rather wondering expression, which seemed to glance so inquisitively from him to Mary, appeared to reproach him with the crime he had been meditating, as if gifted with a more than human intelligence: he felt at once that he was known; that there was another witness besides Mary to testify against him, that there was no longer any advantage to be gained by flight, and that he might as well stop and meet his pursuer face to face. He was still determined, however, not to yield up his prize without a struggle; for to be defeated in a generous action is bad enough, but to be defeated in a crime is worst of all. It is so hard after it to recover a proper self-respect.

"It is the attempt, and not success, confounds us."

This was especially true in the present instance; for if Peter succeeded in carrying Mary safely off, and afterwards compelled her by threats or violence to consent to his wishes, he anticipated little further trouble; but if she escaped from his hands, before the consummation of his purpose, it would be hardly possible to magnify the evil consequences that would be sure to follow.

Even now, notwithstanding the unnatural courage communicated by the liquor he had been drinking, he wished most heartily that he had never embarked in such a boisterous and uncertain venture; and gladly would he have given his favorite sorrel, and all the rest of his worldly possessions, to have been that moment snugly coiled in bed.

But it was a very different coil he was now in. He was, there, he could hardly tell how, far from home, flying wildly through the night, a fugitive from justice, fearful of every leaf and shadow; and only one hour before—one short hour! If it could be taken back! why not? restoration seemed so near, so easy. No, it was impossible for Omnipotence.

"Fool! madman! idiot!" these and stronger terms strove to express his cowardly remorse in vain; inarticulate sounds of rage filled up the measure.

"An hour ago I was innocent and happy; afraid to look no man in the face. But now! If it hadn't been for that single act! How came I to do it? I could have done something else as well. But now it is too late.

Too late!

"Wake Duncan with thy knocking!
I would thou couldst."

Influenced by the various considerations I have mentioned, Peter gradually checked his horse, and, at last, coming to a full stop, he called to Dr. Edgerly to know what he wanted.

"Where is Mary Grant, you rascal?" cried the doctor, jumping from his gig, and approaching the front of the waggon; "give her to me this instant, or I'll break every bone in your body. Miserable coward! villain!"

At that moment, Peter's better angel whispered that he might still pass the whole thing off as an excellent joke, by saying that he had only carried Mary off for a ride, intending to return in an hour; and that when they met Dr. Edgerly, he had thought it would be fine sport just to frighten him a little, and give his old horse a sweat, that was all; but the opprobrious terms with which he was now greeted, at once put to flight all thoughts of such a peaceful accommodation.

"But what have you done to her?" added the doctor; "you have killed the poor child, I believe, upon my word. No; she breathes," and as he spoke, he attempted to lift Mary from the wagon.

"Let her alone, can't you? or, if you can't, I'll make you," cried Peter, leaping from his seat, and approaching in a threatening attitude.

"Peter Redwood!" ejaculated the doctor, now first becoming aware with whom he had to deal; "is it possible? What does all this mean? But I've no time to talk with you now; give me the young lady, and I will give you no further trouble."

"You're very clever, ain't you?" sneered Peter!—"as clever and obliging as anybody I ever see; but I don't want any of your help, nor none of your sass, either; so the less noise you make about it the better. Out of the way, I say?"

"Never! I don't stir from this spot without her."

"Will you clear out o' this, or not?

"No."

"Then, by heavens, I'll make you."

"Oh! stop, stop!" cried Mary, now partially recovered from her insensiblity. "I"—but her warning came too late; Peter had already flung himself upon his comparatively feeble antagonist, with a force, a weight, and an impetuosity to which he could oppose but a very slight resistance. The struggle had hardly commenced, when it was ended by Peter's hurling the doctor from him with fearful violence. He fell into the ditch, and, striking his head against a stone, lay there without sense or motion.

"You have killed him!" cried Mary, "the best, the kindest, the dearest friend I ever had. Do with me what you please. But, oh, God, after this, let him never know one happy hour!"

"It was his fault," muttered Peter; "I did it in self-defense."

He looked aslant at the body—only a body now; and again the burning thought shot like molten iron through his heart; "Done is done, and lost is lost; the soul and the hour come not back." Well, all the better! he could not go back now, if he would. And there was now no longer any obstacle to his designs on Mary. He rather hoped that the dreadful sight she had just witnessed, would so far have shaken her resolution, that she would at once yield full consent to his demands. If not, his fell determination, which, like a beast of prey, seemed to have acquired fresh ferocity from the taste of blood, was all ready to grapple with crimes of yet deeper die.

But, as he turned and approached the waggon, Mary,

gathering strength and courage from despair, sprang to the ground, and, mistaking, in her confusion, the road towards home, she fled, with all the speed of fear, in the opposite direction. One moment she was at liberty—such liberty as the cat gives the mouse—the next she felt Peter's arm around her waist; her trembling feet no longer touch the ground, and, helpless as a lamb in the paw of a wolf, silent, unuttered prayers are all the resistance she can offer.

And what good can prayers do now? Her only friend and helper lies dead at her feet. The voiceless night alone witnesses her miserable condition. Better despair at once, for God no longer meddles in the affairs of men.

But at this moment, just as Peter had forced Mary again into the waggon, and was preparing himself to follow, there came cantering along the road towards Totemwell a single horseman.

"Ah! good evening, sir," he cried, checking his horse so suddenly, that he was almost thrown back upon his haunches, "can you tell me what part of the world this is? I have lost my way, and have been wandering about so long, that I hardly know my right hand from my left."

"Ten thousand devils!" muttered Peter, "it's that Phil. Hastings."

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN EXPLANATION.

"And so," said Mary, as she and Philip sat together one pleasant afternoon, in the shady arbor they had helped to adorn years before, "so you came all the way from New York, on purpose to see me?"

"Yes, to be sure, I did; is it possible you never suspected that? and I should have come just the same if it had been a thousand times as far."

"And yet you were going back again the next morning, without having spoken hardly a single word to me, and almost before you had even seen me."

"I know it; my soul was under a shadow that evening, and I was vexed at finding so many people there, especially that Peter Redwood; but what did you think of it? I know I acted shamefully."

"It did seem very queer that you should go away so soon, and I couldn't account for it in any way; though I thought perhaps I had done something to offend you, or that you never cared so much for us as we did for you."

"You didn't care at all, I dare say; it was a matter of perfect indifference to you whether I went or not?"

"Oh, no; I was very sorry to have you go. I was hardly ever so unhappy in my life as I was that night, after I supposed you were really gone."

"Well, I can assure you I was quite as miserable; I hardly slept a wink all night."

"I don't see why *you* should have been unhappy; you knew you could stay if you chose."

"Yes; but I didn't know whether I should choose or not. It is much better to have your fate in another's hands, rather than in your own."

"You couldn't have loved me, then,—not so much as you pretended."

"Say, rather, I loved you a great deal more. What else could have kept me so upon the rack?"

"Yes; but to go deliberately to work to make oneself miserable, that is the funniest part of it."

"Not at all; don't you know that the scorpion, when he has nothing else to sting, stings his own back?"

"But you are not like a scorpion, I hope."

"I am—a great deal more than you imagine; you must take care how you excite my jealousy. I'm terribly jealous already, I promise you, of that fellow Mason."

"Oh Phil.! I wonder you ain't ashamed to mention his name. To think you should have deceived us all in the way you did, and we should never have suspected it!"

"I never deceived you; it was all your own doing, and Mrs. Harris's. I told her my name was Hastings; but she misunderstood me, and thought I said Mason."

"But when she introduced you as Mr. Mason, you might have corrected it."

"I know I might, and perhaps I ought; but, the truth is, I was too much confounded to do it at the time, and afterwards I was unable to resist the temptation to see you in a mask, and so find out more than I could have done in my own person."

"It was too bad, and I don't think I shall ever forgive you. I feel so vexed and ashamed whenever I think of it!"

"Why, what did you say to be ashamed of? I assure you I derived very little comfort or satisfaction from any thing you said of me; it wasn't a thousandth part of what I should have said of you!"

"Oh, Phil., you know you would hardly have spoken of me to a stranger at all."

"Well, I should have felt it all the more; men never can express half they feel."

"And women, I suppose, a great deal more."

"Certainly, they must express it or lose it; they have no reservoir of love or passion, where they can hoard it up for years without an object; they always spend as they go."

"Yes, I allow they are sad spendthrifts in love; it is only men that know how to be economists."

"Why didn't you finish the sentence, and say, it's only men that need to be? for, honestly, I think we are monstrously selfish creatures. I am, at any rate; I can only love one or two, but then, to be sure, I can love them terribly. But, tell me, Mary, which do you like best, me or Mr. Mason?"

"I liked him best; for I didn't know then what a deceiver he was. I wouldn't have believed it possible that he could have practiced such deception."

"You know, I told you he couldn't be trusted, but you wouldn't believe me. I knew you would find out the truth some day or other. Ain't you glad that I'm not quite such a malicious slanderer as you supposed? But he abused me shamefully; as far as I can learn, he hardly said one good thing about me from beginning to end, and you could sit by and hear it all, and never offer a word in my defense! But when I mentioned one or two particulars in which I thought he was not quite perfect, what a tempest it excited! You could hardly find words to express your indignation."

"Oh, Phil.! you know it's no such thing. I only said you ought not to talk so of a friend; and all the time you were abusing yourself, only to hear me praise you."

"Yes; and what a quandary I was in, to be sure; hardly knowing whether to laugh or to cry. I declare I was never in love with a woman's frowns before; and I never knew that scorn could look so beautiful. It would have killed me outright, if you hadn't kept pouring in balm and oil with one hand, while you wounded me with the other. Such pleasant pain I never felt before. It was very wrong and wicked, I know, and all that; but I am glad I did it, nevertheless. How I shall laugh at Dr. Edgerly—that is, if I ever let him into the secret! my hair is so much darker than Mr. Mason's, and I am so much taller and stouter, he never should have thought of mistaking us for each other."

"Well, you know you have altered very much—shaving and cutting your hair; and you're not dressed as you were in New York."

"Yes; but, after all, it was his vanity that deceived

him. He had a very nice eye for faces. He had never been deceived in his life. Others might be puzzled to distinguish us, but he should have no sort of difficulty. So, of course, after saying so much about it, it would never do to acknowledge his error. And you, too!"

"I see you are determined to vex me; but I want to know how you came to be at Mrs. Harris's, and why you went away so abruptly?"

"Well, I went to Mrs. Harris's simply to see you, and for no other reason."

"But, how did you know that I was there? You didn't recognize me in the omnibus, surely?"

"I recognized Dr. Edgerly and Aunt Bethany; they had changed very little, you know, since I saw them before; and then, finding that you belonged to the same party, and hearing them call you Mary, I had no difficulty in determining that you were the same little Mary I used to love and tease so dearly some thousand years ago, and whom I had resolved, some time or other, to go in search of."

"But you didn't care any thing about me, then?"

"Oh, no, of course not. I didn't love you then, and hadn't been loving you—thinking and dreaming of nothing else for the last century. Let me see, I can tell you the exact time when it happened. I was in my senior year, a mere boy, studying very hard. I had never seen any woman that I cared one straw for, except my mother and sisters; but, one Saturday, I went down to Hartford, to visit a friend of my father's, and to stop over Sunday. He had three daughters, and one of them, I thought, was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen—you needn't feel in the least jealous, for she was engaged—and she read to me poetry, in the softest, sweetest voice—Festus, I think it was, but I am not sure, for I paid more attention to her than to what she was reading; and she made me some lemonade (I thought it was nectar), and when I went away, she gave me a flower. I kept it three weeks, and then threw it out of the window, but afterwards I was afraid some one might step on it, so I went down three flights of stairs, carried it up to my room, and embalmed it in a Greek dictionary; and there, I dare say, it is at this moment. But you can't

think what hard work it was to study, the first week after my return. I used to spend most of the time looking at the stars, reading Longfellow's poems, singing

'Give me the boon of love,
I ask no more for fame;'

and dreaming of a snug little cottage on the shores of Lake George, just big enough for me and my wife, a few books, a piano, and a cradle. There was hardly a moment, in those days, when I was not engaged in framing some such scheme of ideal happiness, and her face was the center of every picture. But, gradually, it grew misty and indistinct; I no longer remembered her features with sufficient accuracy. I considered that she was engaged, and my interest in her died away. But I must have somewhat to supply that vacancy—if not a real, then an ideal mistress. But my ideal was shadowy; my imagination needed help. One night I dreamed a dream. I went back to Totemwell, expecting to find you as when I left—a child. When you came to meet me, I was surprised to find how much you had grown, but still more surprised to find you the exact, but more perfect, counterpart of that image that had so long flitted across my fancy. Then I began to love you, wondering that I had not begun before, and I have loved you, by fits and starts, ever since."

"Only by fits and starts? Are men always so fickle?"

"Fickle? you don't call the sun fickle because clouds now and then get before him. You know he is shining all the while."

"No, but we call the weather fickle, when such changes occur often."

"Well, the weather of the heart may be fickle; but who would have sunshine all the time? But I didn't know you then; my love was an intermittent spring, now it is ever-flowing."

"But, after you saw us in the omnibus, how did you find out where we were going?"

"With my own eyes. I left the omnibus at the next block, and, hurrying back to Eighth Street, followed you at a distance till I saw you go into Mrs. Harris's. I took the number, and went that very evening to engage a room."

"And why did you go away so suddenly?"

"Because I heard that you were engaged to Peter Redwood."

"Who told you?"

"Aunt Bethany. You remember the last conversation we had together, when we were interrupted by Dr. Edgerly. I happened to find the old lady alone not long afterwards; and as I could not talk to you, I thought the next best thing was to talk about you; and you know she is always ready to converse on that subject. So we sat down; and I was listening with all my might to her praises, and ready to hug her for her discrimination, when all at once it came out that you were engaged. I jumped up so suddenly that she noticed my agitation, and asked me what was the matter—if I had the toothache; so I told her I had a sudden pain, right here, for I never like to tell a downright lie when I can help it, and I believed I must go and take a walk. I couldn't stay in the house another day; so, after packing my trunk, I slipped quietly away, without saying a word to any body, and fervently praying that I might never meet one of them again. The next week I spent in weighing the comparative advantages and disadvantages of blowing my brains out, and going to California. But, at length, I determined on the latter, as I thought that adventure was rather more certain than the other; so I bought my outfit and secured a passage on board a magnificent clipper just about to sail round Cape Horn. I should have gone by way of the Isthmus, but time was no object. I didn't care whether I got to California in a month or a year, or in fact whether I ever got there at all. All I wanted was to get as far from New York as possible, and I had some hopes that the ship might be wrecked on a desert island, and all the crew lost except myself."

"And why didn't you go?"

"Well, my trunk was all on board, the ship was to sail the next day, and by this time probably I should have been off Cape Horn—ugh! it makes me shudder to think of it—when who should I meet, as I was walking down Broadway, but Nancy Harris. I at once made up my mind to speak to her, and tell her where I was going; for, to tell the truth, I half suspected that she had some knowledge of my secret, and I thought I should like to have her see what a mighty

martyr I was about to make; but as we came nearer I saw that she wished to speak to me; so to disappoint her I crossed over to the other side, and walked on without looking to the right hand or the left, and running against everybody I met; for I felt so cross and savage that I wouldn't turn out an inch. I had gone, I suppose, about a mile, and was pleasing myself with thinking how cleverly I had evaded Nancy Harris, when, all at once, to my infinite horror and amazement, she darted out from behind a corner where she had apparently been lying in wait, and, before I could get past, or even pretend not to see her, she had me fast by the arm. If she had been a man I should have been tempted to knock him down, for I couldn't bear even to be touched; and besides I was vexed at being hunted by her in that way, especially as I couldn't imagine how she did it; so I smiled very grimly upon her, and was passing by without stopping; but she was not to be shaken off so easily, and said she had something important to tell me, though I didn't deserve to hear it either, after running away from her so shabbily. I pretended to be very much surprised, and asked her what she meant. 'Oh,' said she, 'you know well enough; you can't deny that you saw me half an hour ago, up Broadway, and crossed over to avoid me; you ought to be ashamed of yourself to run away from a lady; but I won't scold you, for I see you are sorry enough already, and besides your curiosity will be a sufficient punishment to know how I overtook you.'

"Upon this I laughed, as folks will when they feel uncommonly foolish, and don't know what else to do, wishing all the time that she was at the bottom of the Red Sea. 'I am sure,' said I, 'I beg ten thousand pardons, but the fact is I was in a devil of a'—

"Oh, Phil.!"

"I know 'twas wrong, besides being very vulgar and improper, but that's the very reason I said it, partly you know to vex her and make her think ill of me, and partly to stir up myself."

"'And you are in a great hurry now, I suppose,' said she. 'You men always are; but it won't take long what I have to tell you. You remember Miss Grant, I suppose; but I see you do from the way you color;' I didn't color at all, and

besides, what business had she to see it? 'Well, the engagement between her and Mr. Redwood is broken off, and it seems all along it was a forced engagement on her part, for she never loved him.'"

"I wanted to ask her how she knew, I can't tell you how much; but I wouldn't; I only said, cold as an icicle, 'Humph! is that all?' 'All?' said she, 'isn't that enough? I'm sure I thought you'd be delighted to hear it.' 'I don't know why you should,' said I; 'these people are nothing to me and I don't expect expect ever to see one of them again.'"

"She looked at me, to see if I was in earnest, and I saw a tear in her eye. I hoped so, at any rate, for she had tried to make me happy, and I was determined to disappoint her, cost what it might. My heart almost burst, but I braved it out. I bid her good morning, without even thanking her for her trouble, and walked on and on till I came to the Battery. What business had she to suppose that I cared any thing about you? I would show her that she was mistaken; I would go to California, for that very reason if for nothing else. So I went to sea the next morning, just to spite Miss Nancy Harris and a few other people, myself among the number; but a fit of sea-sickness cured me betimes of that folly; and, when the pilot-boat came back, I concluded at the very last moment to come too; and, a few days after, having found out, though not from Miss Nancy, that she had told me the truth, I hurried here as fast as steam could carry me; and now, dearest, say, when shall we be married?"

"Never, I am afraid, after what you have just told me."

"Never, why! what!—what! never?"

"Why, I am afraid some day you'll take it into your head to run off to California or Australia, or do some dreadful thing that has no more rhyme or reason in it than that."

"Truly, my conduct hitherto has had little of either; but what rhyme or reason can be expected in a single soul? There will be enough after we are married; and so, the sooner the better! We'll rhyme all day, our lives shall be all poetry; but, seriously, I am afraid myself that if we are not married soon something will happen to prevent it; and to lose you now would be more than I could bear. I wouldn't

feel so miserable again as I did a week ago yesterday, not for ten thousand worlds. Confess, you were a little cruel and hard-hearted then, weren't you, to give me such an answer as you did?"

"No, was I? I didn't know it at any rate. I didn't mean to be. You couldn't have been more miserable than I; but what other answer could I have given?"

"Why, the same answer you gave two days later. Only think how much suffering it would have saved us."

"I know, dear Philip; but I did what I thought was right."

"I know you did, I know you always do; but conscience, I am afraid, is a little bit of a coquette. I thought—shall I tell you what I thought?"

"To be sure, I'm not afraid of any of your thoughts."

"And you won't be angry?"

"Not unless it's something very bad, and then only for the pleasure of making up."

"Well, I thought that day, while we were riding home—I was almost crazy then, you know, and hardly knew what I was about,—and I kept saying to myself, 'Oh yes, it's very grand and pleasant for her to refuse me, and then say she does it from conscientious motives; but I know better; it's nothing in the world but caprice, and pride, and affectation. She could get rid of her scruples fast enough if she had as much simplicity of character as I supposed; but she is just like other women; they'll, any of them, sacrifice their love to their vanity and their fear of doing something that won't seem proper, proper! what, a woman's word! and'"—

"Oh, Phil.! I don't believe you ever thought so; it is'nt like me at all."

"No, I am perfectly ready to allow that; but, tell me honestly, didn't you feel all the time as if you were performing some very grand and virtuous action—as if it were a sacrifice on your part, for which you deserved a great deal of credit; and didn't this feeling go a great way towards confirming your resolution?"

Mary blushed, and hid her face on Philip's shoulder. "I never knew it before," she said, "but I am afraid you are right. How could you ever love me after that?"

"Love you! Why, Mary dear, I loved you all the bet-

ter. You are a thousand times too good for me; and if I didn't spy out some little weakness, here and there, I should have no comfort of my love. And now, I'll tell you what we will do: you shall try and be as wicked as you can, and I will try and be as good as I can, and in that way we shall finally meet. But our wedding, when shall that be—next Wednesday or Thursday?"

"Oh, no, indeed; I think next summer will be time enough."

"Next summer! Oh, Mary! don't let's have any more affectation; you know you never could wait a whole year."

"Well, suppose we try and see which can wait longest."

"Yes, like an Indian boy and girl, holding a coal between their arms. Besides, I know already how it would be, I never could wait for any thing; one to-day is worth a thousand morrows; so let it be next week."

"Next spring."

"No, next week."

"Well, let it be next winter."

"Oh no, no, next week."

"Well then, I'll say next month. I can't possibly get ready sooner than that."

"A month from our engagement?"

"Well, a month from our engagement."

"That will be the 19th of September; I wonder if any body was ever married on that day before! It's a very curious sort of a day, isn't it? I wonder I never thought of it. I must look in the almanac, and find out what great event has ever taken place on that day. I wish it were nearer."

"Why, I am sure it is near enough, though, near as it is, you are so fickle, that"—

"Me fickle! when"—

"Yes, that Hartford lady: first you loved her, then"—

"And have you never loved anyone but me?"

"No, never, you know I haven't."

"Except Mr. Mason."

"Now, Phil."

Letter from Philip to Mary.

New York, Sept. 5, 1851.

DEAR MARY: Yours of the 2nd instant is just received. I am glad to hear that you still continue in the enjoyment of your usual health, also that Aunt Bethany preserves her cheerfulness. You can give her my kind regards, and thank her for the solicitude she expressed in reference to my health. She has no need to feel any anxiety on that score, as I have never been better since I can remember. The weather is extremely sultry, and, as I am told, there is not a soul in town. I don't know how that may be; but I am sure there are bodies enough, as anyone may see and feel who will take the trouble to walk down Broadway at almost any hour from morning till midnight. My dear Mary! dearest, best, onliest! my soul, my conscience! I can never think of evil when I think of you. You are a second, and I sometimes think, a better Gospel to me; do you see that our month is just one-half gone? And what a long, wearisome month it is, to be sure; I should certainly think it was November, in spite of the almanac, if I had not notched every day upon a stick by double entry, and counted them all over, backwards and forwards, by ones and twos and threes; fourteen is all I can make. I have been strongly tempted once or twice to cut two notches instead of one, but I was afraid you would discover the cheat; and I have had serious thoughts of reading Gibbon's History, or of taking a voyage round the world, just to pass away the time; but what with writing to you, and hearing from you, and thinking of you, I really have no heart for such trifles. Then I have to go down town, some three miles or so, as often as once a day, to see if there are any letters in the office, though the penny-post brings them regularly to our door; and I spend at least an hour running to listen when the bell rings so as to be sure and get them the moment they come. And then, when they do come, away I hurry to my room, three stairs at a time, fasten the door, look in the closet to see there's nobody there, and let down the curtains, or else open them as wide as I can to give the folks a chance across the street.

Sometimes I break open the envelope without waiting a moment; and the other day it happened to be very obstinate, so that I tore the letter completely in two, and had a fine time joining the lines together; but it lasted so much longer, and I liked it so well, that I felt strongly tempted to do the same with all your letters; for, to tell the truth, they are abominably short, the last contained only three sheets, and there was an empty space in one of them as big as the palm of my hand. I hope you won't do so again, for I do assure you I didn't get over it the whole day: you must excuse my comparison, but it reminded me of an old lady of my acquaintance who was about to send a friend of her's a mince-pie, but finally concluded that she couldn't afford a whole one, and accordingly reserved one piece for herself. A letter of affection should always be brimful and running over, as if there were

plenty more where that came from. An empty corner, be it ever so small, argues poverty.

But, after all, your letters are too sweet and luscious to eat much of at once, and I usually begin by nibbling at them. First I read the address, letter by letter, and try to fancy how you looked when writing it, especially the Philip, which I can't help thinking drew your lips down in a little pouting kiss. Then I turn it over, again and again, and peep into it, pretending that it's not mine, and wishing I could open it. I lay it down on the table, and walk round it, like a fox round a trap; and at last I pounce upon it in a perfect transport, and the way my eyes travel over the lines is enough to put a locomotive out of breath only to look at me.

I was riding down Broadway yesterday in an omnibus, thinking, as I always am, of you, when, all at once, I began to love you so hard,—so much harder than I had ever done before,—that I was afraid the omnibus would break down under the weight, and very glad that there was no one in it except myself. It seemed exactly as if some one had come suddenly behind me and poured a whole ocean of love into my heart, so that it was almost painful, and more than I could stagger under, though I am prouder of my capacity for love than for any thing else. In fact, there is nothing else I can do half so well, if, indeed, there is any thing else I can do well at all; but here I feel myself equal to the greatest men that have ever lived. When I came to get out I gave the driver half-a-dollar, for I thought my ride was really worth so much, and away I went down Wall street, smiling in everybody's face till they must have thought I was bewitched. But, as for the driver, no words, as the novel-writers say, could express his astonishment. I stopped just before turning up Nassau street, and there he was, still turning the half-dollar over in his hand, ringing it on his knee to see if it was good, and looking up and down Broadway to discover, if possible, what could have become of his seven other passengers; but at last he went on his way rejoicing, and I went mine in good enough humor, but beginning shrewdly to suspect that I had been guilty of a very foolish action. This conviction ripened into certainty when —I hardly know whether to confess to you my weakness—as I approached the Post-Office, I was suddenly seized with a most pernicious longing for some remarkably fine pears—I wish I could send you some, by the way—there disposed upon a stall; and I had already laid hold of three of the most tempting with my eye-lids, when, putting my hand into my pocket, I found, to my infinite horror and consternation, that I had not a single sixpence of change about me, so that I had not only to abandon to a stranger those pears which I already looked upon as my own, but to walk home one of the hottest days we have had this season. All this, as you will see, was entirely owing to you, and I trust you will express a becoming contrition, therefore, in your next letter. I had no doubt that any one of the apple women would cheerfully have supplied my wants, to testify her appreciation of my devotion; but I shrank from such a disclosure of my feelings, and walked home,

moralizing all the way on the strange inconsistencies of our poor humanity.

* * * * * * * *

I see you are determined to make it out that I don't like Dr. Edgerly, and as your reasons are much stronger than any I can offer, I shall have to yield the point. I cannot deny having said, that I should respect him more if he had a little larger share of dignity (though I might not like him so well), and that I didn't consider him quite perfection. Yet, notwithstanding, nevertheless, I hope I may be believed when I say—setting aside his uniform kindness to you, for which I could love him if he were an ogre—that I think he is one of the most agreeable companions in the world, and I don't know when I have spent a pleasanter evening, than one or two I passed with him when you were in New York.

His little fidgety ways; his impatience of contradiction; the cheerful ardor and enthusiasm which he always manifests in spite of his pretended philosophic indifference; his utter abhorrence of cant and hypocrisy, and affectation of every kind; his open and avowed fondness for good eating, and contempt for those who affect to undervalue it; the frank exposure which he makes of his own faults and weaknesses; his keen enjoyment of a jest, and indignation when anyone spoils a good thing in telling it;—I like them all and every one.

It is amusing, too, to hear him talk about his knowledge of the world, and how impossible 'tis for him to be deceived, when all the time he really knows little more than a child, and is the most credulous person I ever saw, till his suspicions are once fairly moved, and then he is most incredulous; and then he has such a desire of communicating information, and precisely on those points where he happens to be most ignorant. It is laughable to see what shifts and turns he'll go through, rather than say bluntly, "I don't know," and that, too, not out of vanity, but merely his excessive good-nature. He told me himself that he never heard one person ask another what was the way to such a street, or any question of the kind, without longing to stop and tell him; and if they happened to apply to him, and he didn't know, he felt mortified beyond measure.

It is astonishing how much he knows; but, then, he is so afraid of being thought pedantic, or else his pride keeps him silent, that half the time one would take him for a perfect ignoramus. He never will put his best foot foremost, and prefers to have the world think of him worse than he deserves, rather than better; and here I can sympathize with him heartily. You remember the evening we went to the theater—I hope you can hear that word now without a shudder,—he confessed to me then that there was an indescribable charm to him in the idea of having it supposed that he was in the habit of frequenting such places, and that in his youth especially he had delighted to risk his reputation, and took no pains to correct the malicious stories that were circulated against him, till at length half the old women in Totemwell, your aunt

Rebecca among the number, believed him to be the very "devil incarnation." But he had lived to see the folly of that, and began to think that, after all, there might be some virtue in hypocrisy. He had learned, he said, to look grave and sober and wise, and thought he should in time make a very pretty hypocrite.

So we agreed to say nothing as to our proceedings; and if it hadn't been for Nancy Harris you would never have known to this day that we had been guilty of such an enormity; that is, supposing that Dr. Edgerly could have kept it a secret, which I am somewhat inclined to doubt. On our way home we both felt so merry and contagious, as the doctor hath it, that we began to sing "Old folks at home" with all our might, making such dulcet harmony that the stars put their hands to their ears to listen; when all at once a stupid watchman, provoked at being so unseasonably disturbed from his slumbers, informed us that such entertainments were not permitted in New York, and invited us to accompany him to the watch-house where we could sing to our hearts' content.

"How, friend!" said the doctor, "are you not mistaken? If you will condescend in your wisdom to listen to me a moment, I think I can convince you that the sage legislators of your city could not possibly have been so barbarous as to include such most sweet voices as ours in their prohibition. Nay, I am persuaded they would rather encourage our efforts."

"I don't know nothing about all that 'ere," said the fellow; "all I know is, we don't permit it; so you just keep quiet."

"You certainly are mistaken there," said the doctor, "for if you don't permit it, how is it that we sing?" and with that he burst out afresh in a most triumphant chorus; at which the other stared awhile, then, suddenly waxing wroth, he called a number of his companions to his assistance, who insisted so strongly upon our accepting their hospitality for the night that at last to escape their importunity, which was really quite annoying, we were compelled to take refuge in flight. I soon left my friends far behind, but seeing nothing of the doctor, I began to fear lest he had fallen into the hands of the Philistines, and was already doubting whether it would not be very magnanimous in me to return and share his captivity, when I heard him puffing along the pavement. He had barely escaped, by the foremost of his pursuers falling into the gutter, and was at first, I thought, a little inclined to cavil at my desertion, but he soon recovered his breath and his good humor, and began to wonder what Aunt Bethany would say if she saw us engaged in such unseemly amusements.

But there, I have said all I know how about Dr. Edgerly, and I hope you are satisfied, though if you are not, I will still try and think of something else. I beg you, however, to bear in mind that I do it solely and entirely for your gratification, and that, though I think him the most perfect model of a man, scholar, philosopher, doctor, good fellow, and what not, that ever existed, and though he eats peaches better than any man I ever knew, yet of my own free

will and inclination I shouldn't mention his name once in a twelvemonth. I feel, all the time I am writing about him, that I am separated from you, that we are no longer alone; I no longer have you all to myself. Now, I confess I am so selfish that I cannot bear a rival; if he were my dearest friend I hate him the moment he interferes with my exclusive possession and enjoyment of you. In fact, in comparison with you I hate all the world. I could almost wish there were no world, that you and I were the only creatures in existence, for then I should be to you what you already are to me, not simply the brightest object in the landscape, but the landscape itself. But now, when I wish to stay, you will say go; I shall know no other name than Mary; with you it will be Philip, Aunt Bethany, Dr. Edgerly, Susy Moody. What a pity that I have not a more enlarged sympathy, a more comprehensive benevolence, or else that your affections had not the same singleness as mine. O Mary, how I long to see you! that's what made that awful blot. You must imagine what it would say drawn out in words, though a thousand blots, each a Pacific, could not tell you half. How cruel it was of you to send me away! Such a vile place as Totemwell is too, where they have a whole day without a mail, and every thing bad might happen without the possibility of my knowing it till too late.

But I've no right to complain, and I won't complain, not while I am as happy as I am now. I never knew what happiness meant before, any more than a born-blind man can know what is meant by color. I never expected to know, either. I did'nt believe there was any such thing; and now, when I hear others talking about it, it is easy to see that it is mere guesswork; they know nothing. And how should they? as they never can have you. I pity them, but I can't help it. And I pity you too, when I think you are in the same predicament. If you could only change places with me for a moment, and know the exquisite pleasure of loving you and being loved by you. Well, well! I believe I'm the only man the sun shines on, and certainly I do cast the biggest shadow. But good night! may God and his angels watch over and preserve you! though I am sure none less than Gabriel is worthy of that office. Good night! only twelve days more, and then I shall see you, and look through your eyes way down into your heart. How can I wait so long? Twelve whole days! twelve times twenty-four hours! twelve times twenty-four times sixty minutes! and old Time, he has never been in love, or so long ago that he has forgotten all about it. He hates us youth. Good night; I long to go to sleep to forget you; I long to sit up to think of you: I really don't know whether the day is too long or too short. But good night! good night! good night!

Monday Morning, 17 minutes past 8.

I have just got through breakfast, that is for to-day. If I live the ordinary life of man, I have the same thing to go through of-

tener than I dare to think. What a wearisome, miserable treadmill this world is! I have exhausted all its pleasures but one; I long to be married; to call you mine, and then lay my head down in my mother's lap. My love for you, alone, makes me in love with life; yet, I am not more than half in love with her either—the jade paints clumsily—she has false teeth and hair; how could I ever have thought her beautiful? Do not be angry with me, dear Mary, as if, because I am unhappy, I were therefore false to you; for I have reproached myself enough for it already. I have argued against it, I have striven against it, but all in vain. In fact, I don't feel as if I had any right to be happy, for I haven't earned it. I must have been made for something higher and nobler, even than loving you; the great problem of life is still unsolved; the question what was I made for? still stares me in the face.

Nearly all my life I have been a child, led by the hand through soft green lanes, lifted over every obstruction; but now, there stretches before me a plain—vast, dim, traversed by a thousand paths, oppressed by the clouds of doubt and uncertainty; how shall I choose among so many? how, through the palpable obscure, find out my uncouth way?

Forgive me for writing you such a selfish letter, or hate me, if you can; I should like that all the more, for then, I shouldn't have so much to do myself; but oh, come and be to me a fate, be to me a creed, teach me what to believe, and what to do.

Totemwell, Sunday evening.

Dear Philip:—I wonder how you feel this evening: if I knew, I would try to feel so too, though I can sympathize with you more easily when you are happy. If what you said about the electric clocks is true, I am sure you are very happy, for my heart beats nothing but joy. Aunt Bethany, too, seems more cheerful this evening, than she has been any time since you went away. She is reading the book you sent her, and I really wish you could see how delighted she is with it. She is all the time saying, how good it was of you to think of an old woman like her! and how strange it was, that you should have known so exactly what she wanted! and what beautiful binding! and what fine large print! If it hadn't been for that, and the message you sent with it, I should hardly have written to you this evening; for, you know, she doesn't think it right to write letters Sunday, and seemed rather surprised when she saw me making my preparations; but I told her how much you would be disappointed, and that if I didn't write then, the letter wouldn't go till Wednesday; so she very kindly suffered herself to be persuaded, after making me promise to tell you all about what a good sermon we had this morning.

* * * * * * * *

I have been reading the Wide, Wide World, and liked it so much, that I could hardly stop for any thing else. I read a great deal of it to Aunt Bethany, and when I came to that part about Miss For-

tune's farm house, she laughed till she cried. She said it was exactly like her father's, and she wondered why folks make such a fuss about it, for she was sure, she could have written it every word herself, just as easy as knit a stocking; and when I told her how much you admired it, and that you thought it altogether the finest part of the book, she wouldn't believe me. I lent it to Mrs. Edgerly after we had done with it, and last evening I went over to to see how she liked it. Miss Lavinia Buckle—you remember her, I suppose, you used to call her Mrs. Æneas—happened to come in while I was there; and when she found what we were talking about, she said she was delighted to find that we had read it, for she had just been reading it herself, and she thought it displayed a great deal of ability.

John Humphreys came nearer to perfection, than any man she had ever read of. And so she went on to tell how much she admired him, and how proud she should be to marry such a man; but she didn't believe there ever was such a man, at least in America. Dr. Edgerly sat over in one corner reading the paper, and we none of us supposed he heard a word of our conversation; but pretty soon, Mrs. Edgerly gave me a sign; so I stole a glance that way, and there he was, not reading at all, but looking over the top of his paper at Miss Lavinia in the most comical way you can imagine. She kept on talking, and he kept on looking, till I thought, I should give up; but presently, he threw down his paper, and began to walk up and down the room, but without taking his eyes off her for an instant. At last, his wife couldn't bear it any longer; and she asked him what he was jerking his coat collar for at such a rate—you know he always does that when he is excited—so he stopped directly in front of Miss Lavinia, and said, "Did you say you liked John Humphreys?" "Yes," she said, "she did very much;" and then he took another turn up and down the room. When he got back, he said again, "Did you say you liked *John Humphreys?*" "Yes," said she, "I said, I liked *John Humphreys.*" At last, he stopped the third time, and said, "Did you say, you *liked* John Humphreys?" "Yes," said she, "I said, I *liked* John Humphreys; I suppose, I have a right to like him, haven't I?" "Most indubitably," said he, "a patent right;" and before Miss Lavinia could think what he meant, he was gone.

But I know you don't like to hear of Dr. Edgerly, so I will stop; though I can't help wishing you knew him better, for I am sure you would like him, he is so pleasant and gentle, that even when he says the most provoking things, it is impossible to be angry; and for my part, I love him as if he were my father.

I am sorry that time passes with you so heavily. With me, I have so much to do, and so many things to think of, the days go like shadows. If you were as busy as I, you would have no trouble. I am really ashamed, when I think how much of my time I spend in idleness. I sit there by the window sewing ever so busily, when all at once, I don't know how it is, I drop my work into my lap, forget there is such a thing as work in the world, and then for

half an hour, perhaps longer, I can think of nothing but how happy I am, and how strange it is that I should be so happy, so that I could almost cry for joy. I wonder if you ever have such feelings. But I know you don't; you are not silly enough for that; but, as for me, I believe I shall never be any thing but a child. I could laugh all the time, if I had anybody to laugh with me; and you, you are always so grave, you frighten me. Perhaps, I shall be grave too some of these days; I will try very hard, at any rate, if you want me to. Since Aunt Rebecca is gone, I have nobody here to teach me; but with you for an instructor, I can learn any thing. Dear, dear Philip, it makes me so happy to think you have promised to read the Bible every day. I hope you won't forget it a single once. I would rather a great deal that you should forget to write to me, and you know how badly I should feel if you did that.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CATASTROPHE.

It is now time to return to Peter Redwood, whom, owing to a broken leg, our story has lately left behind. For many weeks, he was unable to leave his bed. The mortification he suffered on hearing of Mary's kind intentions towards him, greatly retarded his recovery. Now, of course, there was no hope that those intentions would ever be fulfilled. To have come so near winning the prize, and yet, to have missed it, was aggravating. Nor did his father spare his reproaches.

The deacon, indeed, was very angry. But, it was the folly of the thing, rather than its wickedness, that principally aroused his indignation; it was his intellect, more than his heart, that was offended. His fine clear perceptions exposed him to very much the same sort of annoyance that a great musician must experience at hearing a feeble performer on his favorite instrument. And the matter was still worse when Peter undertook to defend his conduct; his illogical, inconclusive mode of reasoning was so utterly repugnant to his father, that, after exhausting every form of sarcasm and invective, he peremptorily ordered him never again to mention the subject under any pretense whatever, that he might, if possible, forget that a son of his had ever been guilty of such a monstrous absurdity.

But the deacon's fertile invention was not yet exhausted. About the middle of September he told his wife that he was going to Boston on business, and should probably be absent one or two weeks. He neither gave, nor did she require, any further explanation; economy, in the strictest meaning of the word, was the extent of her faculties; and the moment her husband passed beyond his garden gate, he was out of her jurisdiction, and at full liberty to direct his movements according to his own judgment and inclination. Accord-

ingly, having gone as far as Boston, he chose to extend his travels to New York; and there we shall find him one pleasant evening, in the same house, on the shady side of Twentieth street, to which we have already led the reader, and engaged in an earnest conversation with the same Mr. Daventry who had so excited the indignation of Dr. Edgerly.

The dining-room in which the gentlemen were seated was handsomely painted in fresco, and connected with the parlors by wide doors of glass. A murmur of voices came through those doors, but soft and mellowed, as if the glass had the same effect upon sound as upon light; and occasionally a carriage seemed to stop briefly before the house, then roll swiftly away. From this, the deacon naturally concluded that there was to be a large party there that evening, and the style of Mr. Daventry's dress confirmed this opinion. Instead of the loose morning gown and slippers in which he had met Dr. Edgerly, he had on a dress coat, and boots of patent leather. His vest was of white satin, and a pair of white kid gloves that had never been worn, lay upon the table. But, though his dress was thus altered, his manner still retained its mocking negligence. Occasionally he drew from his pocket a richly jeweled hunting-watch, and holding it high up before his eyes as if he were going to play "Bob cherry" with the heavy chain and seals twisted among his fingers, he compared it with the clock that stood under a glass bubble upon the mantelpiece, without a case, as if it had been flayed alive, and all its wondrous mechanism of heart and lungs and veins thus laid open to view. He was evidently in a great hurry for something to happen.

"So, Deacon, you say the girl won't have him? Well! it's a pity, after all the trouble you've had! but, pray! how is my old friend Colonel Tadpole? I assure you I've been sorry, once or twice since, that I did not stop and make his acquaintance?"

"Colonel Totling is very well, sir, I believe," replied the deacon, "but, as I was saying"—

"As you did say, you mean," said Mr. Daventry.

"As I did say, then," continued the deacon, "your niece has refused to marry my son; I have no longer any hope,

and, I may say, any wish to see that accomplished. Our former agreement, then, is, of course, canceled."

"Let me see, what did you say that agreement was?"

"The agreement was, that in case your niece *did* marry my son, he was to receive a hundred thousand dollars down, and the remainder at your death."

"And what were you to give me in return for this consideration?"

"In return for this consideration, I agreed to keep her birth a secret from all the world, and never in any way molest you in the full enjoyment of the remainder of the property during the term of your natural life."

"Thank you; yes, I believe that was something like it; you're just the kind of man I like to have dealings with; every thing is so plain and explicit. I wanted to buy, and you wanted to sell; but don't you think you set your price deucedly high? But, I forget; you're a deacon, and nobody can expect to buy a deacon as cheap as other folks. And then, too, it was so obliging in your son to be willing to wait for the rest till I was dead! though that's a word I don't particularly fancy either. Well, the agreement, you say, is canceled? And you've lost your chance—the devil and you have both missed a good bargain? Well, well! time enough yet; you can't be much above fifty."

"Allow me to say, Mr. Daventry! that I have no taste for such jesting; and if you have no regard for my feelings, a regard for your own interests should teach you to be more cautious in your intercourse with one who has"—

"Who has me so completely at his own mercy, you mean to say. All right; I meant no offense. I understand you; I thought you understood me. But what do you propose?"

"That's the very thing I was going to ask of you."

"Me! oh, I never propose any thing; except to keep as much money, and live as long as I can to enjoy it."

"Well, then, I thought of making this proposition. You are to pay me the hundred thousand, as before agreed upon; and, in return, I will place in your hands the clothes and trinkets, and, in fact, all the proofs now remaining of the identity of your niece and this Mary Grant. You will then be freed from all farther apprehension on that score,

and will still have enough remaining to keep up your present style of living, considerably more, in fact, than I ask for myself."

"Yes, yes, a little more! but then you must consider, my dear Deacon, how much more it costs to live in New York than it does in Totemwell. How much, now, do you suppose I spent last year?"

"Well, I should judge that you might have spent ten thousand dollars."

"Yes; well, I spent a little more than three times that amount, my entire income in fact, and expect to do the same this year; so, you see, it would be quite a serious inconvenience to me to lose so large a portion as you mention."

"Not so serious as to lose the whole."

"Why, no, not exactly; but, still, I should have to give up one of my carriages, or make some reduction of the sort. Now, if you could only make up your mind to take fifty thousand, that would be an immense sum, you know, in Totemwell, and it would be such an obligation to me! And, I don't know but I would throw in my trotting horses, just for old acquaintance' sake. They're hardly stylish enough for the city."

"Thank you; but I have no occasion for any thing of the sort at present, even supposing them to be an equivalent; but how do you know that I intend to live always in Totemwell? I may choose the city as well as yourself. Besides, if the property is really so large as you say, I shall be receiving, even then, not more than one-fifth, while many would not be content with less than an equal share."

"Well, suppose we say seventy-five thousand? I don't like to differ with an old friend, but, really you"—

"No, nothing less than a hundred thousand. I shouldn't feel that I were just to myself to take a dollar less."

"But, you don't want it to-night? you have no objection to waiting a month or so, I suppose?"

"I have, I assure you, very serious objections; the matter can be settled as well now as at any time, and the sooner it is done, the better for both of us."

"Suppose I refuse outright?"

"That is a supposition I have no concern about whatever; you know your own interests too well for that."

"My own interests! true; but the interests of the young lady, don't you think they ought to be consulted?"

"She is your niece; if you choose to make her a present, you can do so."

"A present out of her own property! yes, so I might; 'twould be generous, very! how much there is, after all, in the name you give a thing! But you, don't you think you could afford her a trifle?"

"I have been trying for years to advance her interests, and it's her own fault that I have not succeeded."

"Yes, you have worked hard for her, it must be allowed; your disinterested benevolence deserves all praise. I don't wonder her ingratitude has at length exhausted your patience."

"But you have made no answer to my proposition."

"True, I forgot. I was so much absorbed with the contemplation of your kindness. Let me see, you want me to give you one-fifth of my, no, of her property, so that I may keep the rest?"

"Yes."

"And if I do this, you will put into my hands the proofs of her being my brother's child?"

"Yes."

"A hundred thousand is a great deal, but, as you say, it is better to lose a part than the whole. I must give up one of my carriages, but I shall still have all I can use; I shall disoblige myself, but, then, I shall be obliging my good friend, the deacon; and the whole arrangement, in short, is peculiarly ingenious, honest, and satisfactory; but, there is one more thing I'd like to know. Is it Christian? I should be glad to be assured on this point, not that I mind it myself, you know, for my theory and practice are perfectly consistent; but I should hate to think that I had been in any way accessory to involving my friend and partner in such an awkward piece of business. I confess it doesn't seem to me quite clear how your most Christian stomach can digest such a morsel. I may be wrong, for I never entered very deeply into the subject, never was inside a church but once in my life; but I always supposed it was a

part of your creed to deal honestly with all men, and do to others as you would have them do to you. But, perhaps you can explain it."

"I do her no wrong! I take from her nothing that really belonged to her; she's no poorer for me than she would have been otherwise. It's none of my business going round to hunt up property for other people."

"Oh! ah! yes! I see! it's perfectly plain, I thought the fifth commandment—or which is it?—would knock you flat as a flounder, as we used to say when I was a boy; I trust you'll excuse the comparison, but you've dodged it beautifully; the devil 'ill have to sharpen his claws a little before he catches you. But, let me see, how was it? You don't take any thing from her that belonged to her? No, you don't, for this hundred thousand, that you wish to relieve me of, never belonged to her, I have had it myself. Well, I'm glad to find the difficulty is so easily got over, and that you can receive this money from me, and yet be as good a Christian as ever. And if you should still feel any fears on the subject, you might give ten or twenty thousand dollars, you know, to send missionaries over to convert the heathen, and teach them not to steal, or lie, or any other heathenish practices; but, you can put that off till you've no longer any use for it yourself, and then just clap it into your will, and so lay up treasures in heaven, if there is such a place, as I suppose you believe; I've no doubt it would be a capital investment, and pay you a rousing good interest."

"You agree, then, to my proposition?"

"No."

"No?"

"No."

"You refuse, then, to give me the hundred thousand!"

"Most emphatically."

"After all you've said to induce me to believe you intended to do so!"

"I never intended to do so."

"You have been mocking me, then, all this time!"

"You have been mocking yourself all this time."

"Sir! Mr. Daventry! are you in earnest? Do you know that a single word from me will strip you of all this wealth, and turn you a beggar into the street?"

"And can you be so cruel?"

"I shall do it most certainly, the moment I leave this house, unless you give me a different answer."

"You will really be so unkind as to tell my niece that I am her uncle, is that your intention?"

"It is."

"And you will strip me of all my wealth just in the same way as that doctor, what's-his-name, said he'd strip a leech, and leave me nothing, absolutely nothing?"

"No, sir, not one dollar, unless you ratify this agreement."

"But, now, really, deacon! this is not kind, not generous, not christian. I never thought you could have gone so far as this! can nothing change your resolution?"

"Nothing but what I have said."

"It's very hard, but I don't see any help for it. If you won't take any thing less, I shall have to give it to you. Have you the papers here with you?"

"Yes! yes!! they are all ready. All they want is your signature."

"And the trinkets?"

"Are in my pocket; you shall have them the moment the papers are signed."

"But can I trust you? There may be others, you know, that would do your business quite as well as these."

"Mr. Daventry! I don't understand you!"

"Ah, well its all right; you shouldn't be so quick on the trigger. But, I beg pardon, I had no right to doubt you. Let me see, yes, this is all right; where shall I put my name?"

"Here."

"Ah, yes, I see; but, stop a minute, look here!"

While Mr. Daventry had been speaking and bending over the table, he had slowly drawn on his gloves; and now, as the clock struck nine, he pushed open one of the glass doors leading into the parlor, and discovered a large crowd of well-dressed people all standing in perfect silence, with their faces turned in one direction, and apparently expecting some event of more than usual interest and importance.

Turning his eyes the same way, the deacon caught a glimpse, at the farther end of the long parlor, of several ladies and gentlemen drawn up in a row, as if about to answer questions out of the catechism; and looking quite as solemn as they naturally would on such an occasion.

"Is it a wedding?" whispered the deacon to Mr. Daventry.

"Yes."

"Who are they? How came it to be in your house? You haven't any children, have you?"

"Stand up here," said Mr. Daventry briefly, bringing a chair out of the dining-room. "But heavens! what ails the man? Have you seen a ghost?"

"Mary Grant?" said the deacon, holding on to the top of the chair.

"Yes, my niece."

"Philip Hastings?"

"Yes, my nephew."

"And they are married?"

"Listen!"

"I, then, in presence of God and these witnesses solemnly pronounce you man and wife, and what God hath joined together let not man put asunder! Amen!"

"Let me go!" said the deacon.

"But won't you stay and offer your congratulations? No? And not even to get your hundred thousand dollars? Or shall I give it to Mary? Well, I hope, at any rate, you are not offended; I should be sorry to lose the friendship of such a worthy, pious, sincere, and consistent Christian! But you won't speak that word now, will you? You won't be so hard-hearted as to turn me into the street? What! gone so soon? Well, well! he's a smart man; his only misfortune was to find a smarter.

"Really! they make a handsome couple! I wonder what makes me feel so benevolent and good-natured all at once. I'll certainly give them something handsome to start on."

A few weeks after this notable interview, on looking over a country newspaper, my eye fell on the following paragraph;—

MELANCHOLY CASUALTY.

"We learn that Marcus Redwood, a well-known and respectable citizen of Totemwell, in this State, committed suicide in that place last Thursday, by drowning himself in a well. He is supposed to have committed this desperate act in a state of temporary insanity, his mind having been much depressed, for some time, by anxiety arising from pecuniary embarrassment and family difficulties.

I found, on inquiry, that these last words had reference to the conduct of his son Peter, that young gentleman having contrived during his father's absence to raise a large sum of money on the credit of the firm, and afterwards fled with it to California.

The deacon's pride had been broken by previous disappointments, but now his heart was broken, too. All he had done had been for Peter; for his sake he had "filed his mind," by that plea silenced his unruly conscience. He had sold his soul for his love. And this was the end.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONCLUSION.

The wedding took place Thursday evening, and the next morning the bridal party set out on their tour up the North River. It was fortunate that the rest of the company had their own sources of amusement, for it was evident from the very outset that Philip and Mary had entirely lost what capacity they once possessed for making themselves agreeable. They sat as much as possible apart from the crowd, which Philip especially seemed to look upon with a countenance of the most determined hostility. For the first hour he wearied himself in fruitless efforts to sit on both sides of Mary at once; then he seemed trying to sit in the same place, as if they had been ghosts or shadows, any number of which can occupy the same chair without crowding,—though Macbeth does seem rather afraid of incommoding Banquo's ghost by seating himself in his lap,—till, finding both of these impossible, he drew her into a corner, and placing himself directly in front became for a while happily unconscious of the existence of any other being.

"Oh, how beautiful! how perfectly lovely it is!" said Mary, "were you ever up the Hudson before?"

"Yes, once, about a year ago; let me see, it was just a year ago, to a day—I was in this very boat, sitting in this same place, looking at the same landscape; how strange it seems! I remember looking at those far-away hills, and wishing I might live among them; they seemed so calm, so peaceful, so heavenly. Did you ever notice what a delicious melancholy one feels at such a time, what a strange longing there is to plunge into those blue shadows, to wander among the valleys, to climb to the very summit, and see what there is on the other side? If anybody had told me then how happy I should be a year from that time, I should never have believed it."

"Why, weren't you happy then?"

"Happy, no, I'd nothing to make me happy. I had been out of college two years, had done nothing, nor was like to do; had no money to study a profession, and no profession to study; and as to being married, I had no more hope of that than of being emperor of China. There was a young married couple on board, and they were so insultingly happy that I wished with all my heart the boat would sink."

"Oh Phil! I don't believe you; but perhaps, somebody is wishing so about us."

"Well, they have reason; but I don't mean to be any less happy: if they don't like it, let them go and do likewise."

"But I can't help thinking, how strange it is, that we should be cousins, and yet never found it out before. But what sort of a man is uncle Nathaniel?"

"Well, he has always treated me very generously; he paid my expenses through college, and last November he invited me to come and live with him; and I should be very ungrateful to say any thing against him."

"Do you suppose he knew any thing about me, when I saw him that time at Totemwell?"

"I don't know; I think it's very likely, but the less we say about that the better. The whole matter about your father's death was very mysterious, but I never liked to question him about it; if there is any wrong it will soon be righted, and it will be better for us not to know it. He seemed very glad when he heard of my engagement, inquired particularly about the way in which we became acquainted, and asked me many questions about you. Then he told me of Dr. Edgerly's visit, and advised me to write that letter to you; and after I showed him the answer he professed to be satisfied, said he had no longer any doubts, and the quicker we were married the better. So on the whole, I can't think of anyone that is disappointed at the turn things have taken, except Deacon Redwood."

"Yes, there's Aunt Bethany, she feels badly enough at thought of my going away; she is really growing thin, and has had to set back the hooks in her dresses an inch and a half; it makes my happiness seem positively selfish."

These events took place while I was in California. Soon after my return, as I was standing on the steps of the

St. Nicholas, I saw Hastings coming down Broadway, in company with Dr. Edgerly. They had just returned from Niagara and Lake George, where, notwithstanding the lateness of the season, they had had, so the doctor declared, a most glorious time; though some folks, and here he gave me a sly poke with his elbow, might as well be shut up in a patent salamander, for all the good they did to other folks. I then began to give, as I thought, a very entertaining account of some scenes I had witnessed on my way home; but in the midst of my narrative, and the very best part of it, I was terribly mortified to find that Hastings was paying no attention. Some object at a distance had attracted him, and my poor story was forgotten.

At length, I asked him what it was he found so interesting. "Don't you see that bonnet and silk dress?" he replied, pointing to a party of ladies some ways in advance. I told him I did, but saw nothing wonderful in it: I saw thousands such every day. "You do?" said he, "yes, I dare say; but I only see one, and that one is mine, and its whole wardrobe. Wonderful! there's nothing else half so wonderful in God's creation. Wasn't she his masterpiece, his very last? and he wouldn't make worse after better. I wonder she doesn't scorn to walk the earth; did you see how she bounded up when she alighted from the carriage, just like an india-rubber ball?"

"Like a soap-bubble, I should say," cried Dr. Edgerly, who, instead of being alarmed by this strange language, seemed to take it simply as a matter of course. I supposed however, he thought it best to humor him a little, so that he needn't break out into actual violence.

"A soap-bubble," repeated Hastings.

"Yes," said the doctor; "but don't be disturbed, I meant no disparagement to your wife, only to your simile. I have noticed the motion you refer to, and I think mine is better. A soap-bubble is infinitely more graceful and lady-like than an india-rubber ball."

"But see how she carries her head," cried Hastings, bursting out afresh, "and now we are near enough, you can hear her dress rustling; see how it sweeps along the pavement!"

"Yes," said Dr. Edgerly, "though a broom would do that much better; but, seriously, my dear fellow!" here he

sank his voice almost to a whisper, "let me tell you, in confidence, that these things are far from being as strange as you imagine. All women have carried their heads since Eve; at least, we have no satisfactory evidence to the contrary. Judith carried the head of Holofernes besides; and all, except Eve, have rustled when they walked,—and she too, for that matter, after fig-leaves came into fashion. It's very remarkable, but not singular."

"Pho, pho!" cried the other, "what do you know about it? you are nothing but an old fogy."

"No matter for that;" cried the doctor in a heat, "my wife has as good a right to rustle and carry her head as yours, and I bought her that silk dress on purpose. I don't think I ever saw any thing hang more gracefully."

Hastings, I could see, was preparing a reply; and there is no knowing how much more absurdity they would have uttered, but just then, to my great relief, the ladies who had been the innocent cause of this dispute, happening to look behind them, their gallant defenders instantly flew to their sides; and I took the opportunity to make my escape, resolved henceforth carefully to avoid the society of young gentlemen newly married, but especially of old gentlemen whose age had not taught them wisdom.

After this I saw nothing of Hastings for several months. I heard, however, that his uncle had died and left him heir to all his vast property, and that Mrs. Hastings was famed for giving the most delightful entertainments in New York. On my return to the city I hastened to call at her house which I found furnished with almost Sybaritic luxury, yet with a refined and cultivated taste that concealed rather than obtruded the prodigality of its master. I could see the proud vanity of Philip Hastings in the arrangement of every room, and even in the workmanship of the chairs. Amid the greatest profusion of ornament there was nothing tawdry, nothing in excess. Far more was implied than was expressed, and the impression everywhere left upon the mind, was gold not gilt. It was evidently the house of one fond of display, not, perhaps, of the simplest tastes, but who yet heartily despised all mere glitter and outside show.

Mary was much improved since I last saw her, in mind as well as person. No one could have suspected that she had ever lived in a sphere so different from that she now

occupied; she moved, she looked, she talked, like one born in the purple; and if there was a greater openness and simplicity about her than usually characterizes city ladies, it was received, not as a sign of ignorance or ill-breeding, but as an additional proof of her acknowledged superiority to the common safeguards and supports of inferior minds. She had not read a great deal, for she had not time even if she had the inclination; but it was impossible for one in whom the imitative and perceptive faculties were so strongly marked to live long with a man like Philip Hastings, without catching most of those subtle refinements of education that had done so much to soften and harmonize his own character. But this was not the only nor the chief advantage she had drawn from that communion; he had taught her not only to think, but also to feel; he had given her something of his own intensity; he had, in short, set her whole soul on fire; and if the light and heat it emitted were somewhat paler, they were far less inconstant and flickering than his own. But, though she moved a queen among her guests, with him she was still a child. Her mind, though built on a firmer and broader basis, still bowed to his superiority of genius. He, fortunately, possessed those qualities in which she was lacking, and those which a woman most admires, or loves rather, a depth of passion almost infernal, an imagination vivid as the lightning, yet soft and expansive as heaven's own light, and strength that seemed only to want motive and guidance to work wonders. For these she overlooked the weakness of purpose, the vacillation, the cowardice of doubt, the indolence that clogged his efforts. She thought, and thinks still, I dare say, that he is or might be the greatest man that ever lived.

After conversing a while on general topics, he took me into his library, a choice collection of books in very costly but not showy bindings; and here I took the liberty of asking him how he enjoyed his present mode of life. Upon this, he confessed without reserve that his married life had not yielded him the happiness he had once expected, and that there were moments when he would even now gladly lay his head down upon his mother's lap.

It is difficult to describe the emotions which this declaration produced upon me. I was angry to think that anyone

should be so unreasonable, and I was disturbed by such an open avowal of the world's emptiness. At the same time I was secretly elated; for I envied Hastings his wealth, his good looks, and most of all his wife, and I was glad to find that they made him no happier. But though I rejoiced at his unhappiness I was willing to see it removed if it could be done by my agency, and I advised him to travel as the best means of curing his melancholy. After some hesitation he agreed to this suggestion, and before I left the house we had marked out a plan which embraced not only the most of Europe, but a considerable part of Asia and Africa, and could not well be executed in less than five years. They devoted that summer to points of greatest interest in our own country, and about the end of October returned to New York to make preparations for crossing the Atlantic, intending to spend the winter in London. But one morning, a few days before the sailing of the steamer in which he had secured a state-room, Philip came into the little boudoir where his wife was then practicing on the piano. A burning kiss on her forehead first made her aware of his presence after he had been standing several minutes beholding her in silent love and admiration.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "how you frightened me! how long have you been here? But you don't look happy, what is the matter with you, dear Philip? I don't believe you wish to go to Europe; and I'm sure, if you don't, I should a great deal rather stay at home, we could be so happy together!"

Philip made no answer, but seating himself in a luxurious arm-chair, into whose velvet cushions he seemed to sink as into a cloud, he drew Mary into his lap, and making her lean her head upon his shoulder, exclaimed, "There, I am happy now, and if it could always be so"—

"And why can it not be so always?"

"Because, my dear, this is a world of change, the saddest, bitterest word man ever uttered. Talk about monotony and want of novelty! what is God but a monotony? It is His sublimest attribute that he knows no change, and change with us is nothing but disease and death. If this moment could swell to an eternity, if it could! but while I speak it dies, and whatever sweetness it might have had becomes gall and wormwood with the thought."

"Dear Philip, how can you talk of such things? Think how long life is; why should we not enjoy it while it lasts? And then, in heaven there is no more change, no parting."

"Do you call life long? Nothing is long that has an end; but I should not have spoken of these things if I did not think I had found a remedy. Do you know, I have been trying for ten years to be happy? I thought when I found you that I had at last attained the object of my pursuit; I did not consider that my happiness contained in its very perfection the germ of its own destruction. But so it is. I shudder to think how happy I am, when I think also by how insecure a tenure I hold that happiness; so that I should be happier if I were less happy, and enjoy more if I had less to enjoy. But at last I see my mistake. I have looked upon this life as a whole, complete by itself; whereas it is only a part, a beginning, the first chapter only, and no more to be understood by itself than the first chapter of a novel. Now, in order to be happy in this life I must be useful; this indolent do-nothing existence, I am ashamed of it; I hardly dare to look the poorest mechanic in the face. He is working, to be sure, for what some would call the most sordid motives, but he is working. He is counected with the great brotherhood of man by a thousand ties. If he makes only a shoe he adds so much to the wealth of society, while I am only a drone. I tell you, Mary, I have such a passion to be doing, that I sometimes think it would be better to earn my living by housebreaking or highway robbery than not to earn it at all. The vilest thief under the gallows might justly reproach me with being less of a man than he; for if he has done harm, I have done nothing."

"Dear Philip, you can't think how glad I am to hear you say so! but why need you be in such a hurry? After we return from our travels will"—

"What! wait four years, or three years, or one year! I hardly dare wait a single day. My resolution is not like yours; I must humor it, and go when it speaks."

"But what profession shall you choose?"

"I have chosen already—I intend to preach."

"To preach! are you in earnest?"

"Yes, dear—full, hearty earnest; my mind is fully made up, and now I only wait for your approval."

"But a minister with five hundred thousand dollars will be so queer,—I thought you would study law."

"I have no heart for law, except ambition, and that is my worst enemy; but I had thought of this difficulty. A minister with half a million would indeed be an anomaly, but it is easily got rid of."

"And this house, and all these beautiful pictures, and this little room where we have been so happy, and my piano, that you gave me?"

"You can keep the piano, my dear, and some of the pictures; but this house and room, I suppose, must go; and we must give up our carriage, and rich furniture, and large parties, and troops of friends they brought us; but we need not give up ourselves nor our love. Still, it will be a great sacrifice—greater for you than for me—and for this reason I would do nothing without you. Are you willing—are you able to make this sacrifice? Can you give up the flattery, the admiration, the homage that attend you, the elegant leisure, the refined and educated society you are so well fitted to enjoy, and become, if need were, the wife of a poor country minister?"

"Oh, yes! I can do all this, and a great deal more; I don't care half so much for these things as you suppose;" but as she spoke, her voice trembled, and Philip felt a tear fall on his hand.

"My poor, dear, little wife! it was too cruel in me to think of such a thing! I won't do it; there are other ways of doing good besides preaching; I will buy a substitute, or a dozen; there are plenty who would be glad to enlist if they only had the means; but—there is no discharge in that war, and much I fear my weak, cowardly heart, if there is any chance for flight, for desertion. I must be in the front ranks. Oh, Mary! what shall I do?"

"Do what you think right, dear Philip; and if I cry, it is from joy, to think"—

"Thank you, thank you, dear Mary; but, I am already afraid of my own conceptions. I have called up a spirit that makes me tremble before it; how shall I ever dare to do what I cannot bear even to think of?"

"But how could you ever bear to think that you had resolved and then had not strength to perform?"

"Oh, Mary, you are my better angel; you have saved me. I should despise myself to all eternity if, after this, I dared to hesitate. I shall reserve enough for our expenses while I am pursuing my studies, and a little over, and you, of course, will keep your marriage portion."

"Not so, dear Philip; why should not I do something as well as you?"

"But, if I should—if any thing should happen to me. Oh, no, I never could consent to that."

"Then you have less faith in me than in yourself."

"It is not that; my faith in you is like an ever-flowing sea; but, I can't bear to think of your being left in actual poverty."

"Then you cannot trust in God."

"I can trust him, but not tempt him. No, my judgment in this is better than yours; keep at least a part, and if you never need it, as I pray God you never may, you will find ways enough to use it."

Great was the surprise, the consternation of the fashionable world on learning the defection of two of its most valued members. It seemed at first utterly incredible that two persons so young, so popular, so much envied and admired, so blessed with all the gifts of birth and fortune, should voluntarily surrender these advantages; and when the rumor seemed confirmed beyond all doubt, the companions they had deserted began to see strange fears, to feel around them as if the ground they stood on were rotten, or as if the cup of pleasure they had been quaffing so eagerly were a subtle poison. But, presently they laughed those fears away, declared that Philip Hastings had always been an eccentric, visionary, misanthropic creature, and that all they were sorry for was that he had not taken it into his head to give his money to them. But, though all agreed that it was the strangest thing they ever heard of, and that nothing like it had ever happened before, one would have supposed from the variety of motives they assigned as being severally sufficient to account for it, that such things would happen every day. One said it was ostentation, another vanity, another ambition, another gloomy superstition and bigotry. But, gradually, the subject was dropped, as being too hard either for their heads

or hearts; a new star had risen, and the brief reign of Mary Hastings was forgotten.

A few days ago I received the following letter; and though it may seem like violating the confidence of friendship to give it to the public, I cannot withstand the temptation:

TOTEMWELL, *Jan.* 13, 1854.

I will take that mug, if you please, and you can have put on it *Fanny Hastings Jan.* 12, 1854. with your name of course, or initials, just as you choose. And I would like to have another precisely like it, marked *Mary Hastings. Jan.* 12, 1854. There! what do you think of that, my dear fellow? the first and finest pair of twins, they tell me, ever seen in Totemwell, and so much alike, there's no telling them apart except by keeping them in separate cradles. The mother and children are all doing very well, and Aunt Bethany is almost crazy with joy. I think Fanny will have my hair and her mother's eyes, or else my eyes and her mother's hair, I don't know which. In my next I will tell you about Mary. In great haste, yours as ever, or more than ever,

PHILIP HASTINGS.

"P.S. Since I wrote this, the greatest calamity has befallen us that can possibly be conceived of; the children have got so inextricably mixed up through the carelessness of the nurse or Aunt Bethany—each accuses the other—that it is impossible to tell which is which. I thought at first I could tell by weighing, and finding that one weighed four pounds nine ounces and a half, and the other only a quarter, I concluded that the first was Fanny; but, on repeating the test a few hours after, to be sure I was right, the result was just the reverse; so we are as much in the dark as ever. Do write, if you can think of any way to extricate us from this difficulty.

P. P. S. Dr. Edgerly has suggested casting lots. What do you think?

In reply to this letter I wrote that, much as I was surprised at the duplicity of his conduct, and though I was perfectly convinced that the whole affair had been arranged beforehand with the design of getting two mugs out of me, instead of one, and though, by the express terms of our agreement, I was under no such obligation, the present contingency having never, at least at that time, occurred to either of us; yet, so sincerely did I commisserate him under this unexpected affliction, that I was ready to do all in my power to relieve it, though I well knew that a mug, whether gold or silver, would prove but a very trifling consolation. As to the question which was the elder, I confessed I could

not see its importance; in fact, I thought it better that it should remain forever unsettled, since then neither of the young ladies could ever assert any superiority in years over the other. And finally, as to the names, if he should be in any doubt how to bestow them, I saw no better plan than to call one Mary Frances, and the other Frances Mary, which was as near an approach to perfect impartiality as seemed attainable.

He thanked me very warmly in his next letter for this suggestion, which he further told me had elicited the highest admiration on the part of Aunt Bethany, as a proof of most extraordinary genius.

A few days ago, since the above was put to press, on going to the post-office, I found a paper which had been sent to me; and, on opening it, what should it be but the first number of The "Totemwell Gazette, T. Jefferson Totling, Editor and Proprietor"?

It was some time before I had sufficiently recovered from the shock of this discovery to look any farther; but when I did so, before I knew what was coming, I found myself floundering in a long editorial in which the valiant colonel, as eloquent as valiant, and as patriotic as eloquent, announced to the world that, "since there was now a probable certainty, or, at least, a certain probability of Totemwell's at length becoming, what he had so long and confidently predicted, a place of great and increasing importance as a manufacturing community, and since there was quite as good a prospect of their having before long a direct railroad communication with Boston, and since, finally, the want of a newspaper had long been felt in that section, and would now become more apparent than ever, and since no younger and more capable person had been found to fill this important and responsible station, more than ever responsible in the present important crisis of public affairs, he had at length, though very reluctantly, consented to yield to the urgent and pressing solicitation of his friends, and sacrifice his ease to his sense of duty; though a consciousness of his own imperfections," &c., &c., &c.

On looking a little farther I was pleased to find that the magnanimous colonel was not so much absorbed in mere

local matters as to lose sight entirely of questions of a somewhat wider scope.

In a second editorial he had furnished a complete sketch of "The Turkish War," and had indeed executed his task with so much vigor and ability that I should be very glad, did my limits permit to lay the whole before my readers. His military education, as may be supposed, had especially fitted him for such discussions; and it was really delightful to see the spirit of the old soldier continually breaking out, like some ancient charger at the distant sound of the trumpet. The whole column fairly bristled with bayonets, bombs, bastions, batteries, scarps and counterscarps, mines and countermines, and a host of the like horrid and bloody phrases; so that even the old women of Totemwell could not help discovering that the colonel was a man of most tremendous science.

But nothing so moved the colonel's indignation, or caused him to summon to his assistance such a formidable array of the phrases above mentioned, as the various blunders committed by the opposing forces. Anyone could see, with only half an eye, that if he had been commander of the allies, he would have made short work with the Russians; and again, if he had been in the place of Pashkiewitch, he would long ago have washed his feet in the Golden Horn, and scoured the Dardanelles with his broom-stick from one end to the other.

The next thing that met my eye was a long article, headed "Nebraska;" and here I found the honest colonel in somewhat of a quandary, and not inclined to speak his mind quite as freely as in regard to matters a little farther off. I own that, considering his ardent and chivalric temper, I had expected a little more boldness in the discussion of such an exciting topic; but I remembered his situation and forgave him, for no one expects courage or consistency from a postmaster.

On the next page I found additional proof that the colonel's energies, so far from being spent with age, were, if possible, yet more rampant than in his lusty youth. In the same week in which he gave to the world the first number of the Totemwell Gazette, he had led to the altar the fair Miss Lavinia, thus, at the same time, boldly venturing upon two

enterprises of such pith and moment, that one alone would have seemed enough to task the powers of any ordinary mortal.

I was about to throw the paper aside, when my eye happened to fall upon the words, "Our energetic and public-spirited fellow-citizen, Mr. Hastings;" and my curiosity was at once aroused to know what it could all mean, and how a poor theological student could possibly deserve such exalted mention. I had, indeed, a suspicion of the truth, and my hand trembled to that degree, with a very natural indignation, that I could hardly hold the paper still enough to read. I found it as I had feared. Hastings had deceived me; his faint heart had shrunk at the last moment from a consummation of his noble, though some might say Quixotic, purpose; instead of being the poor man I had supposed, and no longer an object of envy, he was still as rich as ever. It was his wealth that was to dam the waters of the Little Trebec, his wealth that had started the flow of the colonel's eloquence, and his wealth that was to convert that lovely and secluded village to the base uses of a manufacturer.

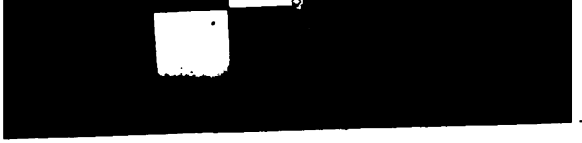
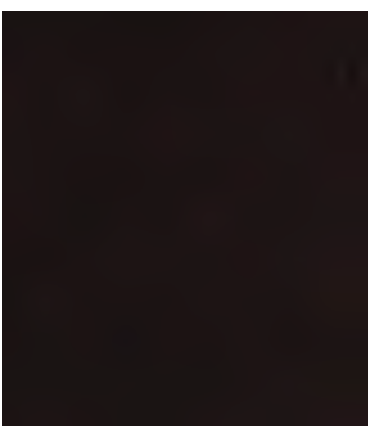
I had sustained a grievous wrong; that was certain. For, had he not compelled me to regard his conduct with despairing envy, as altogether beyond my reach? And, after all, he was no better than I; and, in fact, not so good; for though it was very possible that I might never have made such a resolution, yet, if I had made it, I would have kept it, let come what would. And then, too, I was sorry for the sake of religion—very sorry! There was some comfort, then. It is always a comfort, when our friends do wrong, to think how sorry we can be for them. And, besides, Hastings knew nothing about business—he would, undoubtedly, lose his money in some foolish speculation or other; such hardness of heart never could go unpunished; and, on the whole, I liked it better so, for he would thus lose the happiness of a good conscience, he would grow peevish and fretful, and then—Mary would be sorry, perhaps, that she hadn't married—somebody else.

As to the other persons in our story, if the reader feels any curiosity in regard to them, Mr. Cadger has lately opened a tavern in Totemwell; and a friend of mine, who stopped there one day last week, assures me that it is the

most comfortable house he ever visited, and advises me, by all means, if I am ever that way, to give him a call.

Mr. Dickey has been some time married to Nancy Harris, and I believe they live very happily together.

Dr. Edgerly is still flourishing, and, I hope, will long continue to flourish in a green old age. He is almost too far advanced for us to expect any great increase in wisdom; but I trust that his practice will continue better than his professions, and that the goodness of his life will prove a sufficient antidote to the looseness of his conversation.

And now I feel, very sadly, that it is time to bid my reader good-by; though if I hoped that he would be half as sorry to leave me as I am to leave him, this assurance of sympathy between us would go far to alleviate the pain of separation. But I cannot flatter myself that this will be the case; talking is so much pleasanter than listening, and I have held him so long by the button—well, well! he's gone, and left his button in my hand. I'll carry it home, and sew it on my coat—it has wanted one this long time. I have got so much out of him, at any rate.

THE END.